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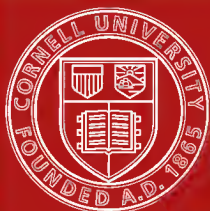
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A
V I E W
OF OUR
R E L I G I O N,

WITH REGARD TO ITS SUBSTANCE,
WITH REGARD TO ITS HISTORY,
WITH REGARD TO THE ARGUMENTS BY WHICH
IT IS CONFIRMED,
AND WITH REGARD TO THE OBJECTIONS BY WHICH
IT IS OPPOSED.

EIGHT SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,
IN THE YEAR MDCCXCII,

AT THE

L E C T U R E

FOUNDED BY THE LATE

REV. JOHN BAMPTON, M. A.

CANON OF SALISBURY.

BY JOHN EVELEIGH, D.D.

PROVOST OF ORIEL COLLEGE,
AND PREBENDARY OF ROCHESTER.

O X F O R D,

SOLD BY J. COOKE;
AND BY B. WHITE AND SON, AND
F. AND C. RIVINGTON, LONDON.

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1792

IMPRIMATUR,

JOHAN. COOKE,

Vice-Can. OXON.

G. C. C.

Mar. 20. 1792.

TO THE
UNDERGRADUATES
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
THESE LECTURES
ARE ADDRESSED;
AND AN HABITUAL ATTENTION
TO THE GREAT TOPICS,
ENLARGED UPON IN THEM,
IS MOST EARNESTLY RECOMMENDED
BY THEIR
VERY FAITHFUL FRIEND AND SERVANT
THE AUTHOR.

E X T R A C T

FROM THE

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

OF THE LATE

REV. JOHN BAMPTON,

CANON OF SALISBURY.

—— “ I give and bequeath my Lands and
“ Estates to the Chancellor, Masters, and
“ Scholars of the Univerfity of Oxford for
“ ever, to have and to hold all and fingular
“ the faid Lands or Estates upon trust, and to
“ the intents and purpofes hereinafter men-
“ tioned ; that, is to fay, I will and appoint,
“ that the Vice-Chancellor of the Univerfity
“ of Oxford for the time being fhall take and
“ receive

“ receive all the rents, issues, and profits there-
“ of, and (after all reparations, and necessary
“ deductions made) that he pay all the re-
“ mainder to the endowment of eight Divinity
“ Lecture Sermons, to be established for ever
“ in the said University, and to be performed
“ in the manner following :

“ I direct and appoint, that, upon the first
“ Tuesday in Easter Term, a Lecturer be yearly
“ chosen by the Heads of Colleges only, and
“ by no others, in the room adjoining to the
“ Printing-House, between the hours of ten
“ in the morning and two in the afternoon, to
“ preach eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, the
“ year following, at St. Mary's in Oxford, be-
“ tween the commencement of the last month
“ in Lent Term, and the end of the third
“ week in Act Term.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that the eight
“ Divinity Lecture Sermons shall be preached
“ upon either of the following subjects—to
“ confirm and establish the Christian Faith,
“ and

“ and to confute all heretics and schismatics—
“ upon the divine authority of the Holy Scrip-
“ tures—upon the authority of the writings of
“ the primitive Fathers, as to the faith and
“ practice of the primitive Church—upon the
“ Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus
“ Christ—upon the Divinity of the Holy Ghost
“ —upon the Articles of the Christian Faith,
“ as comprehended in the Apostles’ and Ni-
“ cene Creeds.

“ Also I direct, that thirty copies of the eight
“ Divinity Lecture Sermons shall be always
“ printed, within two months after they are
“ preached, and one copy shall be given to the
“ Chancellor of the University, and one copy
“ to the Head of every College, and one copy
“ to the Mayor of the City of Oxford, and
“ one copy to be put into the Bodleian Libra-
“ ry; and the expence of printing them shall
“ be paid out of the revenue of the Land or
“ Estates given for establishing the Divinity
“ Lecture Sermons; and the Preacher shall
“ not

“ not be paid, nor be entitled to the revenue,
“ before they are printed.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that no person
“ shall be qualified to preach the Divinity Lec-
“ ture Sermons, unless he hath taken the De-
“ gree of Master of Arts at least, in one of the
“ two Universities of Oxford or Cambridge ;
“ and that the same person shall never preach
“ the Divinity Lecture Sermons twice.”

S E R M O N I.

1 P E T. III. 15.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man, that asketh you a reason of the Hope that is in you.

IT is a distinguishing property of our Religion that it not only admits of a rational inquiry into its truth, but also incites its professors to this inquiry in the most forcible manner, making it a part of their religious duty. We are commanded in the text to be ready always to give an answer to every man, that asketh us a reason of the Hope that is in us: or, in other words, we are commanded to satisfy ourselves universally of the truth of our Religion, so as to be prepared on all occasions to assign our reasons for believing in it.

Our Religion may be considered with regard to its substance, with regard to its history, with regard to the arguments by which it is confirmed, and with regard to the objections by which it is opposed. These four great topics include the principal circumstances, which affect our Christian Faith: under them we

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have

have ample means of satisfying both ourselves, and others, concerning the Hope that is in us.

And many are the reasons, which ought to induce us on occasions, like the present, to prepare ourselves by a general discussion of these great topics to comply with the command of the text. In an age when the real substance of our Religion is misrepresented by men of the most opposite characters and intentions; when the manner, in which it has been received and conveyed down to us, is traduced by the most insidious and unsupported insinuations; when the arguments in its defence are studiously disjoined from each other and frittered away by successive detractions of many of their most convincing parts; and when the whole body of old objections against our Religion is recalled, and enforced by new ones, which are every day suggested by an adventurous and sceptical philosophy; in such an age it is conspicuously our duty to fortify our minds by the information, comprehended under the general topics of Christian Theology which I have above enumerated. Discourses also on such general topics may well be interspersed among others on the particular parts of our religious profession, which the founder of this Lecture has wisely marked out, as subjects of our discussion. Thus interspersed,
they

they will conduce, on an extended scale, to similar good purposes with those reflexions at large on any human science; which, in the progress of disquisitions on particular branches of it, enable us from time to time to form such adequate conceptions of the whole, as are found to be essential to a full comprehension of the instructions, which are communicated even on its most detached and minute divisions. Such general information, moreover, cannot fail of being eminently serviceable to the younger part of my audience, for whose benefit this Institution was peculiarly calculated. Since without it early improvements in religious knowledge will be so desultory and imperfect, as to afford little reason to expect, either that Theological students will be sufficiently instructed to qualify them in future life to teach others, or (what ought never to be an object of less serious concern) that young and unexperienced minds in general will themselves be effectually guarded against that most extensive species of infidelity, which is founded on ignorance of the real circumstances of our

^a “ From the several conversations which it has been my chance to have with unbelievers I have learned that ignorance of the nature of our Religion, and a disinclination to study both it and its evidences are to be reckoned among the chief causes of infidelity.”

Beattie's Evidences, Vol. I. p. 6.

Religion, and is constantly betraying itself by insignificant and impertinent objections against its truth, and by that senseless blasphemy which so often shocks the ears of good men in private conversation. Truth, indeed, has on all occasions so much force, that, when clearly proposed, it must command attention and respect: but the truths of Christianity are, farther, so admirably calculated to satisfy the hopes of the best men, and to allay the penitential fears of the worst; that, wherever they are early and thoroughly understood, prejudice, instead of exerting itself against them, must co-operate with reason in their favour, and secure for them such influence on an uncorrupted heart, as the opposition of ignorance will in vain attempt to destroy.

Since, then, a general discussion of the great topics, under which I have distributed the consideration of our Religion, and which are of extent sufficient to enable us to comply with the command of the text, is well suited to the present times, is expedient at proper intervals amidst the particular subjects prescribed for this Lecture, and, moreover, is likely to be of the most important service to the younger part of my audience; I shall confine myself to it in the following discourses, and, without any apology for calling your attention

tention to truths of which you must often before have heard the greater part, or any farther introduction, I shall propose it in general terms as my design to state, what our Religion is, what the manner in which it has been received and conveyed down to us, what the arguments by which its truth is defended, and what the objections with which it is assailed. Or, to propose my design with its particular limitations, I shall endeavour—First, to state regularly the substance of our Religion from its earliest declarations in the Scriptures of both the old and new Testament to its complete publication after the resurrection of Christ;—Secondly, to give a sketch of the history of our Religion from its complete publication after the resurrection of Christ to the present times; confining, however, this sketch, towards the conclusion to the particular history of our own Church;—Thirdly, to state in a summary manner the arguments adducible in proof of the truth of our Religion;—And Fourthly, to point out the general sources of objection against it, and to shew that a forcible removal of these offences by divine interposition would be inconsistent with our Religion itself; concluding the whole with a particular account of those objections, which are advanced against our Religion from the pretensions of philosophy.

To begin, then, with stating regularly the substance of our Religion from its earliest declarations in the Scriptures of both the old and new Testament to its complete publication after the resurrection of Christ.

The declarations of Scripture, which form the substance of our Religion, ascend in their earliest references to that supreme Being, who exists without beginning of days. They inform us that from ^beverlasting, from a duration, which numbers have no powers to express and the mind of men no faculties to comprehend, is God: that he is a ^cSpirit, is ^dpossessed of life in himself, and is infinite in perfection; but incomprehensible in his nature: and, moreover, that through his own free goodness he originally created and continually preserves whatever else besides himself has existence both in heaven and in earth.

The first intelligent beings, created by him, are sometimes in Scripture called spirits from the refined constitution of their nature: at other times they are called angels from their ministration in the divine economy. Various are

^b Pf. xc. 2.

^c John iv. 24.

^d John v. 26.

“Jehovah” or “I am,” the Scripture name of God, is immediately derived from his inherent life. And by an oath, referring to this distinguishing property of the Godhead, was the Almighty often pleased to confirm his promises: “As I live saith the Lord.” Num. xiv. 21. Rom. xiv. 11.

the passages of holy writ, which assure us that they were created upright; while at the same time the fall of some among them most unhappily demonstrates that they were created also free agents and capable of sin. Why they should be permitted thus to fall, and why when fallen they should farther be permitted to tempt other creatures to involve themselves in a similar fate, are circumstances left among the secret things of God. Nor less unresolved by Revelation are the questions, “whether any part of matter was created at so early a period as the first intelligent creatures; and whether those creatures were clothed with material bodies?” Revelation, while it draws arguments for our instruction from the conduct, condition, and agency of superior beings, informs us, indeed, concerning particular circumstances of angelic history; but, to the utter disappointment of vain curiosity, it says nothing professedly with regard to this history.

Destined for human use, it confines itself to human concerns. After a full, but indefinite, assertion, that “in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,” it confines its professed information concerning the material creation to such circumstances, as particularly relate to man and the system which he in-

^e John viii. 44. Jude vi.

^f Gen. i. 1.

habits: instructing us, that all the various objects, which we perceive and admire around us, were originally produced, and have since been preserved, by the all-perfect God; and moreover, that among the productions of the material world this all-perfect Being, having formed man's body from the dust of the earth, was pleased in a distinguishing manner to breathe into his nostrils the breath of life. Thus animated with a spirit of heavenly extraction, man was said to be formed in the image of God, was constituted sovereign of this lower world, and was invested with the good things of it. To prove, however, his grateful obedience under these blessings and to fit him (as we may ^e presume) for greater in another and eternal state, conditions of trial were imposed upon him. Like the angels, man was created upright and a free agent. By the wisdom of God obedience to a positive precept was enjoined him; and by the same wisdom the fallen angels were permitted to suggest temptations to the contrary. His own choice led him to disobedience, and to death, the predicted consequence. And this consequence, it might be feared, would contain under it not merely a

^e See Bishop Bull, concerning the first covenant and the state of man before the fall, in the third volume of his Sermons and Discourses, 8vo. P. 1079, 1091. &c.

privation of animal-life here, called temporal death; but (what in the regular course of things must be expected to follow from the guilt of free and corrupted agents) that privation also of the enjoyments of eternal life hereafter, which is called the second or eternal death. But, the universal progenitor of mankind having thus fallen through the temptation of superior and malicious beings, and having also entailed upon his posterity a depraved and infirm nature; man was not left doomed to those endless evils, which might have been dreaded as the unavoidable punishment of each individual's voluntary and unexpiated sin. His great creator graciously and immediately interposed to provide a remedy for his fall. But, so much did it cost to redeem his soul, that the remedy must astonish every rational creature. The ^h eternal son of God (one of those Persons whose coexistence in nature with the Father forms part of the incomprehensibility of the Godhead) was in process of time to take upon him the nature of man. In that nature, united with his own in the same Person, he was to give mankind whatever ⁱ instruction was necessary for them;

^h Isaiah ix. 6. Zech. xiii. 7. Rom. viii. 32.

ⁱ Deut. xviii. 18. 1 Cor. i. 30. Even the Samaritans appear to have been fully convinced that when the Messiah came "he should tell them all things." John iv. 25.

and

and by the meritorious sufferings of that nature, thus intimately connected with the divine, he was to make ^k atonement for their sins and to provide them with the most extensive means of escaping those dreadful consequences of their corruption, which threatened to involve them in death eternal: with means ^l as extensive, as the influence of the first man's fall. "As by one man's disobedience ^m many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one many were to be made righteous." "Christ was to taste death for ⁿ every man." "He was to give himself a ransom for ^o all."

It is not, however, declared in Scripture to be necessary that all men should be made acquainted with the circumstances of this Redemption to qualify them for a participation of its blessings. Millions have partaken of corruption through Adam in different ages and degrees without knowing the source of their corruption. And millions may partake

^k See concerning the atonement made for us, Acts xx. 28; Rev. i. 5; and the whole of the 53d Chapter of Isaiah, and of the 9th and 10th Chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

^l "God promised our first parents immediately upon the fall that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head: and by virtue of this Promise all truly good men were saved by Christ from the beginning."

Sherlock on Providence, p. 225, 226.

^m Rom. 5. 19—"οἱ πολλοί" in both parts of this verse ought to be rendered "the many" or "mankind in general."

ⁿ Heb. ii. 9.

^o 1 Tim. ii. 6.

of Redemption through Christ in equally different ages and degrees, notwithstanding their ignorance of him in this life. God, we are expressly told, is “the Saviour of all men;” though we are told at the same time, that he is so “especially of those that believe.” These merciful designs, indeed, were not all revealed at once to any body of men: they are collected from different parts of Scripture and from the completion of the whole. The intimation of a Redemption, which was given to the original transgressors, was sufficient to encourage hope; and more appears not to have been intended by it. But, from the declaration that “the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head to the triumphant ascension of the Prince of life, the same merciful designs are pursued with an uniform direction to their great and final completion. Indeed, we find on this occasion so uniform and wonderful a whole, that infidelity might be tempted to suspect some preconcerted plan of human contrivance; were it not that many of the inspired penmen appear not to have understood their own predictions on the subject, and

^p 1 Tim. iv. 10.

^q Gen. iii. 15.

^r Dan. xii. 8. 1 Pet. i. 10, 11, 12. 2 Pet. i. 20, 21.
See on this subject Burgh’s Scripture Confutation, 2d edit. 8°.
P. 33, 34.

much

much less to have had a connected knowledge of the different parts of the edifice, which they were contributing to erect.

But, whatever deliverance from future evil might be designed for man, no sooner had he forfeited his innocence, than he was reduced by the wisdom of his Creator to a state of 'laborious activity, well calculated for sinful creatures.' In this state he was left amidst labor and pain to ward off for a season temporal death; and by his virtue, here to be exercised in various trials, hereafter to be accepted through his great Redeemer, he was left to secure for himself an inheritance in life eternal. The various parts of the material world, the various operations of the human mind were thenceforth to suggest to him (according to the determination of his own free will) means of purification, or of farther debasement. General ' hopes of Redemption, and general ' rules of conduct were given him, and without doubt general assistance of the Holy Spirit (that third Person in the incomprehensible Godhead, whose operations were from the beginning to be among the principal means provided for man's recovery) was ^w given also, to effect in honest

^a Gen. iii. 19.

^t Gen. iii. 15.

^u Gen. iv. 7.

^w Gen. vi. 3. Pf. li. 12.

minds an acceptable obedience. But the depravity of man's heart soon became destructive of his virtue. His descendants increased and their vices also increased. Neither the laws of conscience nor the more express commands of the Deity were effectual to restrain their headstrong passions. Every ^{*} imagination of their heart was evil: and violence overspread the face of the whole earth. To no effect was Enoch, who had walked with God, translated to the regions of heavenly bliss with a design to convince his brethren that the road to happiness in a better world was still open to religious obedience. To no effect was Noah raised up to be a preacher of righteousness, and a ^y time limited for the reformation or destruction of mankind. Either to prove the ruinous consequence of sin, or to inflict a severer punishment on the more immediate descendants of the original transgressors by a sudden and general triumph of death, all the inhabitants of the earth, save eight persons, were swept away by an universal deluge. But, the promises of God concerning man's Redemption were unalterable. Heaven and earth might pass away, but his word could not pass away. Immediately after this fatal event the Almighty ^z smelled a sweet favor from that

^{*} Gen. vi. 5.

^y Gen. vi. 3.

^z Gen. viii. 21.

sacrifice.

sacrifice, which had been instituted as a type of the great Redeemer, and determined that he would not any more smite every living thing: moreover, he was graciously pleased to provide mankind with ^a new laws for their direction. To these laws tradition appears to refer both the foundation of natural Religion, and the articles of Faith prescribed to the Jewish Profelytes of the Gate. To the same laws and the late display of divine vengeance it is referred also that we read of no public and general crime before the building of the tower of Babel. On the presumptuous erection of this edifice was manifested the first extraordinary interposition of the Almighty to restrain the depravity of mankind, after he had promised not to inflict upon them a second general destruction. He divided them into ^b separate nations by a confusion of tongues: thus providing against an uniformity of corruption among them, and providing also in the ordinary course of his moral government means to punish their wickedness by the instrumentality of each other.

But, notwithstanding this interposition, soon did the depravity of the human heart again widely extend its influence: soon did the descendants of Noah, from imperfect observa-

^a Gen. ix.

^b Gen. xi. 8.

tions and groundless conjectures concerning the motions and natures of the ^c heavenly bodies, form for themselves, first perhaps, (under the traditions which they might recollect, or under the influence of what their own ^d unworthiness might suggest, concerning the necessity of a mediator) a race of tutelary gods or intercessors with the most High; and afterwards, as their ^e corruptions increased, ^f Gods of a supreme and independent nature. That mankind, therefore, forgetful of the commands enjoined to Noah and his posterity, might not be involved a second time in an universal alienation from the living God; and also that they might not be unprepared to receive the promised Redemption; it pleased the Al-

^c Of what sort the original corruption of divine worship was, we may infer from Acts vii. 42, 43.

^d Secker's Lectures, 8vo. Vol. II. p. 145.

^e We shall easily conceive to what a degree religious traditions may be corrupted from the following remarkable fact: "Some Saxon Monks, who had formerly introduced the Gospel into Rugia, dedicated a Church there to their patron St. Vitus. The inhabitants afterwards relapsed into Paganism, forgot the true God, and, when they were converted again about the year 1170, they were found to be given up to the worship of the idol Suantovit which they had derived from "Saint Vitus."

Jortin's Remarks on Eccl. Hist. Vol. V. p. 232. 1st edit.

^f What Mr. Hume asserts in his natural history of Religion, to prove that Polytheism was the primary Religion of mankind, has no better foundation, than that which supports the political systems of those speculatists who suppose that all Government originated in the free and uninfluenced choice of the people.

mighty

mighty to select ^g one from the faithful then left, to impart to him a particular knowledge of his duty, and by confining the Redeemer to his ^h descendants to interest them more immediately in the preservation and publication of those prophecies concerning this great Personage, which were to be entrusted to human care: that the service of the living God might not be left without advocates among men, some true worshippers were at different times, by traditions derived from them and miracles wrought among them, to convey ⁱ instruction to the idolatrous Heathen and occasionally to dispell their gross darkness even before the day-spring from on high should visit them; and that there might be some guardians worthy to be entrusted with the sacred ^k oracles, some country fitted to receive the ^l sun of righteousness; it was ordained that there should be “ a ^m chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation.”

Such were the important designs of the ⁿ Jewish dispensation.

^g Gen. xii. 1, 2, 3.

^h Gen. xxii. 18.

ⁱ See Jenkin's Reasonableness of the Christian Religion, Vol. I. p. 73, &c.

^k Rom. iii. 2.

^l Mal. iv. 2.

^m 1 Pet. ii. 9. Exod. xix. 5, 6.

ⁿ The term “ Jew,” which is the appropriate denomination of the descendants of Judah, soon included under it the Benjamites, who joined themselves to the tribe of Judah on the revolt

The promises made to the posterity of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, the miracles wrought in their preservation and increase, and, above all, their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, are every where urged as arguments against idolatry and types of universal Redemption. After this deliverance, as if occasional interpositions were inadequate to his gracious purposes, the Deity vouchsafed by a continuation of miracles to take immediately upon himself their temporal government. Nor can the human mind conceive a scene more awful, or more impressive of religious obedience, than that which ushered in the laws and ordinances of this new Kingdom. While the visible interposition of the divine Majesty conferred on it a solemnity and dignity, which no ° language but that of Inspiration can describe; the ^p public display of this wonderful condescension was calculated to pre-

of the other ten tribes from the House of David. After the Babylonish captivity, when many individuals of these ten tribes returned with the men of Judah and Benjamin to rebuild Jerusalem, the same term was made to include them also. From hence not only all the Israelites of future times have been called Jews; but farther all the descendants of Jacob are so called by us at present from the very beginning of their history; and we speak even of their original dispensation, as the Jewish dispensation.

° Some of the most beautiful and sublime passages of sacred poetry consist of allusions to the wonderful scene which was exhibited on mount Sinai. See Lowth de sacra Poesi Heb. 3d edit. p. 113.

^p See Exod. xix. —.

C

clude

clude all possible suspicion of imposture and to convey the most durable instruction to posterity. At the same time the precaution also, with which the divine commands were delivered, served to prove their great and lasting importance. For, to prevent as much as possible that intermixture of human error, which might arise from the contracted duration of men's lives; the Mosaical instructions were not, like former Revelations, left to the conveyance of tradition, but ⁹ written and engraven by the finger of God. And well are they worthy of our attention on account of their excellent morality; but, particularly ought we to observe the manner, in which they are calculated to consecrate a peculiar people to the service of the true God by the prohibition of intercourse and intermarriage between them and their idolatrous neighbours, (that fatal cause of the corruption of the old world, when the ^r sons of God went in to the daughters of men) and by numberless precepts, which were designed to create in them a settled abhorrence of the ^s advocates for Heathen superstition,

⁹ Exod. xxxi. 18. Ib. xxxii. 16.

^r Gen. vi. 2.

^s That the Jewish laws are singularly favourable to strangers, as such, is abundantly evident from Lev. xix. 34.—xxiii. 22.—xxiv. 22.—xxv. 35.—Num. xv. 15, 16.—Deut. i. 16.—x. 17—19.—xxiv. 14—17.—xxvii. 19. Had Mr. Gibbon been acquainted with these and many other such parts of the Jewish law; he would not have asserted in the most unqualified manner

and which to some refined moralists favour too little of universal charity. How effectually these injunctions operated in forming the Jews into a separate body from the rest of mankind is exceedingly remarkable. To this very day, like the well-cemented ruins of some old fortresses, they exhibit proofs of the most durable contexture; and, however their original use be superseded, adhere together with undiminished force. Nor did it contribute in an ordinary degree to promote the great ends of the Mosaical dispensation, that the rewards and punishments of it were immediately distributed; and that the Jews were left to discover, by other means, the doctrine of a future state. For, how could this people be so strongly guarded against the temptations to idolatry,

manner on account, perhaps, of some few passages of the old Testament which he did not thoroughly understand, "that the moral attributes of Jehovah may not easily be reconciled with the standard of *human* virtue." History of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. V. p. 202. But, whatever such men may presume to assert, we know, on the authority of one wiser and better acquainted with the subject, "that no nation had statutes and judgements so righteous as all the law which was set before the Jews." Deut. iv. 8.

¹ With regard to the doctrine of a future state both the Jews and the Gentiles appear universally to have derived traditional information on this important subject from some original Revelation, communicated to mankind in the early ages of their history: that of the Jews, however, continued very much more pure in consequence of the instruction, conveyed to them by the descriptions of God and the promises of Redemption, which are every where found in their Scriptures.

which were ever soliciting their senses from present objects; as by the contrary assurance of present gratifications? Or by what other so effectual a method could they be made to look forward with interested confidence to that great Lawgiver, whom Moses himself ^u commands them to obey in language the most explicit and solemn? Under such influence if the Law did not, by its spiritual design, as a ^v school-master bring them to Christ; their zealous attention from temporal motives to every particular, relative to him, would make them instruments of universal salvation. Exclusive, indeed, of such considerations, had the Mosaical covenant proposed to its partakers future and eternal rewards without full information that these were not to be obtained through works of the law, unless sanctified by Faith in their promised Redeemer; it would apparently have superseded the necessity of this Redeemer. And since the Divine Mercy did not think fit to propose explicitly the conditions of our eternal life before the great sacrifice for sin had been actually offered; we cannot enough admire the wisdom, by which the necessary temporality of the Mosaical sanctions was employed to prepare the way for a better covenant.

^u Deut. xviii. 15—19.

^v Gal. iii. 24.

At the same time that the promised descent of the Redeemer might not lose of its influence by being common to too many, it is very remarkable how it is limited: first to ^x Isaac, then to ^y Jacob, then to ^z Judah, and afterwards to ^a David and his posterity. Nor was it thus limited without some concomitant and immediate token of divine favour. Each of these patriarchs was soon distinguished by his riches and power.

Care having been thus taken to preserve in some part of the world the knowledge of the true God, and to prepare a sacred repository for the prophecies, which were not only to authenticate the Redeemer on his arrival, but also to prepare mankind for his reception; we may every where find these reasons of the Jewish dispensation insisted on and enforced. It was not for their own virtue that the Jews were made particular objects of divine care; but because Jehovah loved their forefathers, who amidst an idolatrous generation had remained uncorrupted; and for the glory of his name, to be displayed in the universal Redemption of mankind. ^b This their great Law-

^x Gen. xxi. 12. Heb. xi. 18.

^y Gen. xxxv. 12. Mal. i. 2, 3.

^z Gen. xlix. 12. ^a Acts ii. 30.

^b Compare Deut. ix. 7. with Deut. x. 15, 16. And see the 48th and 49th chapters of Isaiah.

giver and their prophets fully declare, while they upbraid the Jews with unworthiness of divine favour. And though the history of this people for many ages immediately after the promulgation of their law is one continued relation of perverse obstinacy and disobedience; yet did not the merciful Providence of God cast off these rebellious children, but at different times raise up holy prophets to reprove them and almost to force them back to their duty. So much was the universal and eternal interest of mankind concerned in the preservation of that seed, through which all the nations of the earth were to be blessed! And while by alluring promises every day fulfilled before their eyes, by grievous threats, and even by the severest temporal punishments they were reduced at length to some partial obedience; the great work of man's salvation was accelerated. Those prophets, who denounced through the Holy Spirit the most oppressive bondage on this rebellious nation, foretold also with encreasing clearness through the same Spirit the future deliverance of mankind and the eternal blessings of Messiah's Kingdom. Nor is the precision, with which they pointed out the great Saviour, unworthy

^c The Jews were never guilty of idolatry after the Babylonish captivity.

of the most particular attention. Almost every circumstance relative to him was marked out with minute detail. His miraculous ^d conception ; his birth, with the particular ^e time and ^f place of it ; the ^g obscurity of his outward appearance ; his ^h fasting during forty days ; the ⁱ spotless purity of his life ; the ^k greatness of his miracles ; his ^l triumphant, though humble, entry into Jerusalem ; the ^m betraying of him for thirty pieces of silver ; his execution with common ⁿ malefactors ; his ^o patience under all manner of insult and torture previous to his death, while his ^p back was given to the smiters, his ^q hands and feet were pierced, and the parching thirst, occasioned by his agony, could procure no other assuaging potion than ^r vinegar mingled with gall ; his making of his grave ^s with the rich ; his ^t resurrection on the third day ; his ^u triumphant ascension ; and the ^v flocking together of the Gentiles to his ensign ; all these and many more circumstances, relative to him, were prefigured and foretold with a precision, eminently characteristical of Omniscience. Perverse

^d If. vii. 14.^e If. liii. 2.^f If. liii. 9, 11.^g Zech. xi. 12.^h If. i. 6.ⁱ If. liii. 9.^j If. ix. 3, &c.^k Dan. ix. 25.^l Prefigured by Moses and Elijah.^m If. xxxv. 5, 6.ⁿ If. liii. 12.^o Pf. xxii. 16.^p Jönah ii. 10.^q Mic. v. 2.^r Zech. ix. 9.^s If. liij. 7.^t If. lxix. 21.^u Pf. xxiv.

and invincible must the scepticism be, which remains uninfluenced by it in any situation. No wonder, therefore, that it should have left without the possibility of excuse that obstinacy, which refused assent to this prophetic evidence, when it was afterwards drawn together and presented by the Apostles to the Jewish nation, with a display of miracles correspondent to those of the great Redeemer himself, and with a force peculiar to the accomplishment of writings, which had long been regarded by this nation as their distinguishing glory. But, like the * infidel lord who would not believe the Prophet Elisha's gracious prediction, they were to see the great promises of God fulfilled before their eyes, but not to taste of them. Indeed, to verify incontrovertibly the reasons here assigned for the Jewish dispensation, and to preclude all supposition of predilection in the Almighty for the posterity of Jacob, his † beloved, for their own sake exclusively; ten of the twelve tribes of Israel, rendered no longer useful in the grand scheme of man's salvation by their obstinate idolatry and the limitation of the Messiah to the tribe of Judah, were many hundred years before his coming dispersed and removed from the peculiar protection of the

* 2 Kings vii. 2.

† Mal. i. 2.

Almighty :

Almighty: a punishment, which was in a conspicuous degree to await their brethren also, and which was only deferred till the great purposes of their separate and national establishment had been fully accomplished.

In the mean time the other nations of the earth were exercising, under various circumstances and in various degrees, that reason, which, however perversely applied, was given them to promote their own^a happiness and the glory of their Creator. After their dispersion at Babel they formed themselves into societies, established^a empires, cultivated science. But, they^b corrupted the Religion, given to Noah and his descendants, by Polytheism (as hath been declared) and by idolatry: they corrupted the promises and commands of God, involved themselves in the punishment of a^c reprobate mind, and became ignorant of the true nature both of God and themselves. Their temporal

^a "Parvulos nobis dedit igniculos, quos celeriter malis moribus opinionibusque depravatis sic restinguimus, ut nusquam naturæ lumen appareat. Sunt enim ingeniis nostris semina innata virtutum, quæ si adolescere liceret, ipsa nos ad beatam vitam natura perduceret." Cic. Tusc. Quæst. L. 3. C. 1.

^a Shuckford's Connections, Vol. II. p. 67. 2d edit.

^b When Cicero describes the Causes of the corruption of mankind, he mentions the poets first, and with greater propriety than he was himself aware of; since these contributed, by debasing divine traditions, to the general corruption very much more than could ever be known to the Roman philosopher: afterwards he mentions the depraved examples, which are met with in public life. Tusc. Quæst. L. 3. C. 2.

^c Rom. i. 28.

success,

success, however, puffed up their vain imaginations, often tempted the true worshippers to desert the living Jehovah, often called down denunciations and inflictions of divine vengeance both on the Gentile and Jewish world. Human reason, indeed, did not succeed even thus far every where. In countries distantly removed from the seat of Revelation, by degrees the most debasing superstition usurped the place of Religion, the powers of the mind were left uncultivated, and the foolish heart of man appears to have been darkened both with regard to things temporal, and eternal. But, though God was pleased so far to wink at these times of ignorance, as not immediately to interfere either to extirpate or to reform the offenders; and though he caused his sun alike to shine upon the just and the unjust; yet were not mankind left unregarded by their great moral Governour: they were all universally going on with that state of probation, to which they had been reduced by their original parents, or rather to which they had been restored by the mercy of God: and according to their ^d con-

^d In Lucian's writings (Amstelodami, 1743. Vol. III. p. 602, 603.) a Heathen is made to ask a Christian "εἰ καὶ τὰ τῶν Σκυθῶν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ εὐχαριστῆσαι;" "do they record in Heaven even the actions of the Scythians?" and the answer given him is "πάντα, εἰ τυχοῖ γὰρ Χρῆστος καὶ ἐν ἐθνείῳ" "all of them, since Christ is also among the Gentiles."

What is thus asserted, was universally not less true of the Gentiles before, than after, the coming of Christ.

duct

duct in this probation were they, under the Atonement of their great Redeemer, to receive their portion in another life. The Gentiles, having a power (as Revelation ^e sufficiently declares) to do by nature the things contained in the Law, might render themselves fit objects of divine favour by living agreeable to its injunctions: and they, who sinned without Law, were to perish without Law, not less ^f assuredly, than they who sinned in the Law were to be judged by the Law; ^g those, who had no other written Law given them, having a Law written in their hearts, their consciences bearing them witness.

The Gentiles, however, instead of striving through the divine mercy to extricate themselves from the curse of sin, had not only proved unworthy of the food, and gladness with which their hearts were filled, and consequently much more unworthy of the eternal blessings to which they might have aspired; but the Jews also (as we have seen) could with difficulty be restrained within bounds of religi-

^e See Rom. i. 19, 20. Ibid. ii. 14. Besides, we must here recollect, what has above been declared, that some assistance of the holy Spirit appears from the beginning to have been extended universally to the infirmities of human nature. See Gen. vi. 3, &c.

^f Rom. ii. 12.

^g Rom. ii. 14, 15.

ous duty. Even when this chosen people had ceased after the Babylonish captivity to profane their Religion by idolatry; they made it, as far as in them lay, of none^b effect by their traditions. But the perverseness of the Gentiles and Jews had evinced the universal and inveterate depravity of human nature; andⁱ thus had itself been preparing the way for the great Redeemer. Conducively to the same important end, the Gentiles had, besides, demonstrated the insufficiency of man's most cultivated reason to retrace, after long obliteration, the great duties of a religious life. And the maxims, occasionally inculcated, or ostentatiously displayed, by their philosophers had illustrated the admirable fitness of such a morality, as Christianity was to enjoin. The Jews also had preserved and made^k known the prophecies which were to authenticate the Redeemer; and, by abhorrence of Idolatry after their return from Babylon, had been brought to recommend the worship of the invisible God.

Preparation had by these and other means been made for the Redemption and perfect instruction of mankind. Preparation had been

^b Mark vii. 13.

ⁱ Rom. iii. 9, 25.

^k These prophecies were known not only to all the Jews, but also to the Heathens, as it appears from Virgil and other Heathen writers.

made :

made : and the fulness of time came. After the Jewish Scriptures had been closed for an awful period of nearly four hundred years, the birth of the great Saviour was announced by a multitude of the heavenly host. And well, indeed, might the important message be declared to contain tidings of great joy to all people.

From the first fall of mankind sin had reigned in their mortal bodies : and the wages of it had been continued misery. Of this the Heathen philosophers were so far sensible, that they recommended perfect ¹ virtue, as the only solid foundation of happiness. But they could ^m no where find this virtue, and were at a loss where to find their happy man. By requisitions, better suited to human infirmity, Revelation, from the first introduction of human misery, had been preparing a renovation of happiness for mankind : obscurely and typically, often, in the beginning ; but not so, when Christianity was finally proposed as the completion of all former revelations. The Christian covenant began not with the most distant requisition of Stoical apathy, or unattainable perfection. The voice of him, that cried in the wilderness, required no such qualifications in mankind. It

¹ See the fifth book of Cicero's Tusculan Questions.

^m "Nemo sine vitiis nascitur" is a truth universally admitted by the wisest Heathens.

addressed

^a addressed itself to them, as sinful creatures, and exhorted them to repent. With the same exhortation the Redeemer also himself ^o entered upon the publication of his Religion; and the same was the introductory doctrine of his ^p disciples and destined successors. The first step towards the restoration of mankind to divine favour was repeatedly pointed out in an humble confession of their own unworthiness. Nor were the subsequent means of counteracting the bad effects of their depravity left either to be discovered, or to be regulated by themselves. By ^q instructions, delivered in his own and his Father's name from his mouth who spake as never man spake, and by his all-perfect example and ^r atonement who was tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin, was made such provision for our assistance and acceptance in the performance of our duty towards God, our neighbour, and ourselves; as at once is calculated to restore our nature to its proper perfection, and to ^t proportion to our abilities the

^a Mat. iii. 2.

^o Mat. iv. 17. Mark i. 15.

^p Mark vi. 12.

^q See more concerning this instruction in the fifth Sermon where it is urged, under the internal evidences of our Religion, as an argument in its favour.

^r Matt. 5th, 6th and 7th Chapters, John v. 43.

^s 2 Cor. v. 21. See also the parts of Scripture above referred to concerning this Atonement. ^t Matt. xxv. 14—23.

obedience

obedience required from us. During the ministry on earth of this wonderful Personage, he was engaged either in thus instructing his followers with regard to their duty, and in providing the merciful means of their present and future happiness; or in evincing, by displays of the most astonishing miracles and by completions of prophecies, the reality of his pretensions and divine mission. During his ministry on earth, whatsoever had been written in the Law, or in the Prophets, concerning the office and character, concerning the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of the great Redeemer received in Jesus of Nazareth its perfect accomplishment. From the moment that the glorified Jesus, having arisen from the dead, was invested with his office of Intercessor for mankind and was openly announced as their future judge, their promised Redemption was completed. A new covenant between God and man commenced. A covenant, into which all nations were to be admitted by Baptism; and in which they were to be supported and perfected by solemn commemorations of the great sacrifice, which had been offered for their sins. A Covenant, which, though comprehensive in its efficacy of the first man

^u Matt. xxviii. 19.

^w Luke xxii. 19.

and * all his descendants, disclosed itself with various degrees of light; and shone not forth in all its splendor before the resurrection of its great mediator.

From that time God was pleased explicitly to † inform mankind concerning their state of trial in this life, and concerning the conditions of their future judgement: that, though they must here remain subject to temptation from the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and at length to death itself; they were provided with abundant means of escaping that misery hereafter, which is to be the certain and dreadful consequence of wilful perseverance in Irreligion, and which is called death eternal: that, through the infinite atonement made for them by his blessed Son, he would assist their infirmities by the preventing and continued influence of his Holy Spirit, would pardon their sins, and reward them with peace here and eternal glory hereafter; provided, on their part, that they would embrace these his gracious offers with that determined Faith in the doctrines revealed by him, which proceeds, under the evidences of their truth, from humble reliance on his infinite perfections; and

* See concerning the universality of Christianity the passages of Scripture above cited, and also what is said on the subject in the sixth Sermon.

† This information may be collected from the universal tenor of the Apostolical writings.

with

with that obedience to his precepts, which demonstrates a sincere and universal desire to obey them. The Apostles and others were appointed to announce this covenant: while the persons, to whom it was announced, being in possession of the free will, which their original parents, and their more immediate ancestors, the Gentiles and Jews, so obstinately perverted, had full power to accept or reject it. It was foretold that preachers should continue in future ages to propose the same terms, and that mankind should continue to be invested with the same powers of acceptance, or rejection. But in Christianity every offer of divine mercy was to be completed. No farther covenant was ever to be proposed: nor this withdrawn. If even an angel from heaven were to teach any other doctrine, he was to be * accursed: while at the same time all the † scoffs of the latter days and the ‡ gates of hell itself were never to prevail to the eradication of this holy Religion.

Such is the substance of our Religion from its earliest declarations in the different parts of Scripture to its complete publication after the resurrection of Christ. Such, therefore, was our Religion at the time of its original completion: and such also it continues to be to

* Gal. i. 8.

† 2 Pet. iii. 3.

‡ Mat. xvi. 18.

this day ; the grand scheme of man's redemption having been fully perfected by the acceptance of the atonement made by Christ for human sin, and admitting in itself of no variation from subsequent circumstances of time or place.

As to the display of miraculous powers with which our Religion was at first published ; and the infallible manner, in which it was so recorded for the permanent use of mankind, as to enable them with certainty to collect for themselves in every age those conditions of their future and eternal happiness, which have been above stated ; these are circumstances of which the relation will fall under the next head.

S E R M O N II.

P E T. III. 15.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man, that asketh you a reason of the Hope that is in you.

HAVING stated regularly the substance of our Religion from its earliest declarations in the scriptures of both the old and new Testament to its complete publication after the resurrection of Christ, I am now to give a sketch of its history from this publication of it to the present times ; and thus to point out the answer, which we may give concerning the hope that is in us, as far as relates to the manner in which our Religion has been received and conveyed through successive ages down to our own times.

This head is so extensive, that, compendiously discussed, it will furnish matter for three Discourses : the first will carry us from the publication of our religion after the resurrection of Christ to the establishment of it by Constantine ; the second from its establishment

by Constantine to the commencement of the Reformation; and the third from the commencement of the Reformation to the present times, or to the present state of our own Church.

To begin, then, with the first. The Apostles, who were commissioned by our blessed Saviour to publish his Religion, were men destitute of every worldly advantage; but they were men, who had been ^a with him from the beginning, and, together with their great persecutor and future associate, were distinguished by an ingenuousness of disposition, which in all ages has been required as a necessary preparation for the reception of divine Truth. St. Peter's repentance, St. Thomas's confession, and St. Paul's conversion, are eminent displays of this disposition.

At first the Apostles, like their great Master, confined their instruction to that nation, which had hitherto been the more immediate object of divine Revelation. But, they soon learned that the God, whom they preached, was the God not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also. The miraculous effusion of the Holy Spirit by degrees opened and enlarged their understanding on this important subject; and his various gifts raised their feeble powers to the ability of executing

^a John xv. 27.

the task of preaching the Gospel to the whole world, to which they had been commissioned by their great Master. It was impossible that our Saviour should himself in his human capacity be every where present before his sufferings to preach his Gospel: and, as the Jewish nation had been particularly calculated for his reception, and Judæa was to be the theatre of his mighty works, it was necessary that the Gospel should be first preached unto the Jews. But, from the commencement of this salvation the Gentiles were not unapprised that they also were to partake of its blessings. No sooner did the Saviour of mankind appear in the flesh, than the wise men of the East were conducted by the leading of a star to the habitation of this king of Israel. And no sooner again was the salvation of mankind effected, than the partition between the Jewish and Gentile worshippers was removed: the veil of the temple was immediately rent in twain from the top to the bottom: St. Paul also was soon after called to be the Apostle of the Gentiles: Cornelius's prayer was heard: the Holy Ghost fell upon him: and that Gospel, which had hitherto been the peculiar glory of Israel, became a light to lighten the Gentiles.

^b Acts xiii. 46.

In the Acts of the Apostles we have a concise account of the incessant ardor, with which the preachers of Christianity went on, after the communication of the Gospel to the Gentiles, to make known to the whole world the glad tidings of their ministry. Their zeal carried them by different routs into distant countries: supernatural powers every where raised for them the attention of mankind: and the sanctity of their lives and doctrines improved this attention to the advantage of their new Religion. How far they actually extended their progress has been the subject of curious, and often of sceptical inquiry. It is perhaps impossible, it certainly is unnecessary, to determine this question in the present age. The natural blessings of any country are effaced by indolence or disaster; and both the advantage and remembrance of religious improvements are done away by the neglect, or the perversion of religious obligations. But, notwithstanding every insinuation to the contrary, we may rest assured from good authority that the first preachers of Christianity not only visited all the distinguished countries of the old world; but also that their zeal carried them beyond the regions, into which either ambi-

^c See Stillingfleet's *Orig. Britan.* p. 37, 38.

^d Tertullian says "Britannorum inaccessa Romanis loca, Christo vero subdita"—*adversus Judæos*, c. 7.

tion or avarice had in those days extended the geographical discoveries of Roman science. The prediction was fully accomplished, which declared that before the destruction of Jerusalem * “the Gospel should be preached in all the world, for a witness to all nations:” and St. Paul had the joyful opportunity of assuring the Colossians that “the Gospel was come unto them, as it was also in all the world.”

The Apostles in their first preaching of Christianity contented themselves with delivering by oral communication the great and simple truths of their Religion. The extent of their personal industry was the extent also of their instruction. This industry, however, was indefatigable: and its success was soon followed by other means both of disseminating and sup-

Eusebius also says concerning our Saviour's original disciples, “Κηρτυλειν δε (αυτους) εις παστας το τε Ιησν ονομα, κ̄ τας παραδοξες πραξεις αυτου κατα τε αγρας κ̄ κατα πολιν διδασκειν, και τως μεν αυτων την Ρωμαιων αρχην και αυτην τε την βασιλικωτατην πολιν νειμασθαι, τως δε την Περσων, τως δε την Αρμενιων, ετερως δε το Παρθων εθνος, και αυ παλιν το Σκυθων, τινας δε ηδη και επ̄ αυτα της οικουμενης ελθειν τα ακραι, επι τε την Ινδων φθασαι χωραν, κ̄ ετερως υπερ τον ωκεανον παρελθειν επι τας καλεμενας Βρετανικας νησους.”

Euseb. Demonst. Evangel. l. iii. p. 112. edit. Par. 1628.

* Matt. xxiv. 14.

† Col. i. 6.

‡ See Origen against Celsus, l. i. c. 7. and l. ii. c. 13. Paris 1733.

Correspondently with this propagation of our Religion Arnobius says, “Quod si falsa ut dicitis historia illa rerum est, unde “tam brevi tempore mundus ista religione completus?”

Adv. Gentes, l. i. p. 33. Ludg. Bat. 1651.

porting the truth. Within a ^h short time after the descent of the Holy Spirit it pleased the divine Providence that St. Matthew should publish an account of the life, doctrines, death, resurrection, and ascension of his great Master. Thus was a foundation laid for similar and supplemental writings, which ensued in their respective seasons. About twenty years after the publication of St. Mathew's Gospel, ¹ St. Mark, the disciple of St. Peter, abridged (as it appears) in many instances the Gospel of St. Mathew, and by the addition of some particular circumstances adapted it more fully to general use. A farther interval of a few ^k years

^h " Postea enim quam surrexit Dominus noster a mortuis et induiti sunt supervenientis Spiritus Sancti virtutem ex alto, de omnibus adimpleti sunt et habuerunt perfectam agnitionem, et exierunt in fines terræ ea quæ a Deo nobis bona sunt evangelizantes, et cœlestem pacem hominibus annunciantes, qui quidem omnes pariter et singuli eorum habentes Evangelium Dei. Ita Matthæus scripturam edidit Evangelii, &c.

Irenæus adv. Hær. l. iii. c. i. edit. Massuet.

I might mention different opinions concerning the time when the Gospels were written : but, for the sake of precision, I shall mention only that of Townson, who is among the latest approved writers on the subject. He supposes, with Cosmas of Alexandria, that St. Matthew wrote his Gospel about the Time of the Persecution upon St. Stephen's Death ; Discourses on the Gospels, p. 25. And again he says p. 113. " we may rest secure " that St. Mathew's Gospel was written by the year 37."

¹ Townson says that St Mark's Gospel was written about the end of the year 56, or of the year 60. Discourses, p. 168.

^k With regard to St. Luke's Gospel, Townson says only that it was written after St. Mathew's and St. Mark's, and that St. Luke had seen those Gospels, p. 200.

succeeded,

succeeded, before St. Luke, the beloved companion of St. Paul, undertook to write on the same subject; and finished his Gospel to the particular advantage of the Gentile world; ¹ putting into it the doctrines preached by St. Paul. In the mean time the more distinguished among the Apostles were laboring incessantly in the great work of converting mankind: and being ordained, like the Evangelists, to teach men of every country, and every age, they were perpetuating in common with them the various instructions, by which they were to build up the Church of God. In the Acts of the Apostles, written by St. Luke, and in the various Epistles still extant, and written by St. Paul, St. James, St. Peter, St. Jude, and St. John we may admire the ^m contempt of danger with which these Holy men attested the truth of what they had heard and seen: we may admire the zeal, with which they went on to improve their disciples: we may admire also the Mercy of God, who has furnished posterity through their means with the most perfect in-

¹ See Irenæus *advers. Hær.* l. iii. c. 14. See also Bp. Horsley's *Tracts*, 8^{vo}. 1789. p. 326.

^m "As far as ecclesiastical history can ascertain us of it, all the Apostles but John (and that to make good the prediction of Christ) suffered violent deaths by the hands of those that persecuted them merely for their doctrines".

Stillingfleet's *Orig. Sac.* p. 275. 4to. edit. 1680.

structions

structions in righteousness. But there is one circumstance, which regards the writings of the new Testament, and which particularly calls for our grateful admiration. It was appointed by the Providence of God that these writings should be submitted to general examination, and be left to make their different impressions on good and bad men, before the destined finisher of them was removed from the world. At an interval of not so little as ⁿ 50 years after the publication of St. Mathew's Gospel, St. John is said to have sanctioned by his ^m approbation the three first Gospels, to have supplied their ^p deficiencies in his own, and to have refuted in it some ^q heretical opinions

ⁿ Townson says, p. 109, that St. John's Gospel was published after the taking of Jerusalem: And again, p. 211, that the several circumstances as to the writing of it are strongly in favour of its late publication.

^o Eusebius says of St. John, “τελος δε επι την γραφην ελθειν τοι-
“ αςδε χωριν αιτιας των προαναγραφειων τριων εις παντας ηδη και εις
“ αυτου διαδεδομενων αποδεξασθαι μεν φασι, αληθειαν αυτοις επιμαρτυ-
“ ρησαντα. Hist. Eccl. l. iii. c. 25. Reading's Ed.

See also Cave's Hist. Liter. Vol. I. p. 16.

^p Jortin says, “St. John had seen the three first Gospels for he wrote his own as a supplement to them.”

Remarks on Eccl. Hist. Vol. I. p. 46. 1st edit.

^q That St. John's Gospel was written against the Nicolaitans and Cerinthus is asserted by Irenæus, l. iii. c. 11. p. 188.

Jortin says, “the Ebionites denied the Divinity and the Divinity of the Humanity of Christ; and St. John seems to have
“ had them both in view.”

Remarks on Eccl. Hist. Vol. II. p. 266.

which

which had arisen concerning the person and dignity of his Saviour. In the same manner the Epistles had been generally received and had produced their effect, before he addressed to the seven Churches of Asia those exhortations and most remarkable predictions, which close the sacred volume. Long was the beloved disciple preserved in this life, that by his concurrence at a distant period he might give the strongest confirmation to the veracity of the other Evangelists and Apostles, and that he might supply whatever could be wanted either to edify, or to console, the Christian believer till the consummation of all things: thus before he was admitted to the joy of his Lord, was he to facilitate the progress of others to the same happiness.

Various and decisive are the arguments, by which these Scriptures of the new Testament, as * Eusebius has ascertained their number and as we have them at present, come recommended to our acceptance. A correspondence

* Hist. Eccl. 1. iii. c. 25.

* Mosheim says that the books of the New Testament were the greatest part of them received in the Church before the middle of the second Century — Vol. I. p. 108. — English Translation, 8vo. 1782.

The Canonical books are supposed not to have been finally and authoritatively fixed before the Council of Laodicea, towards the end of the fourth century. But Lardner says that the Canon may justly be said to have been settled before that time.

Works, 8vo. 1788. Vol. VI. p. 29.

with

with the oldest versions, and a coincidence with the earliest citations, establish beyond a possibility of doubt the general authenticity of our modern copies. That the writings themselves were also given by Inspiration ought not to be doubted by any one, who admits the truth of the doctrines contained in them. For, if the Holy Spirit was to direct the Apostles in their addresses to the 'adversaries of our Religion; we cannot suspect that his infallible aid would be withholden, when they were addressing themselves to the persons, for whose sake those adversaries were to be refuted, and that too in words, which (whether it were known immediately or not) were to be recorded for the instruction of all ages. If, besides, the Holy Spirit interfered particularly to control and direct the Apostles with regard to the "places where they were to preach; he could not, we may assure ourselves, be less attentive to the doctrines which they preached, and especially to those among their doctrines, which were to be of the most extensive and lasting importance. And if, moreover, it was foretold that the Holy Spirit should 'teach the Apostles all things and bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever Christ

† Luke xxi. 15.

‡ John xiv. 26.

" Acts xiii. 2. Ibid. xvi. 6, 7.

had said unto them, and expressly that he should * guide them to all truth; doubtless, we have abundant reason to presume that their writings must have been delivered under his infallible direction. With regard to the first part of the sacred writings, which is contained in the Jewish Scriptures, our blessed Saviour † declares concerning the Law that it was easier for Heaven and Earth to pass away than that one tittle of it should fail: we are informed also on the † authority of the New Testament that prophesy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost: and, besides, that David ‡ spake by the Holy Ghost. And if this is the case with regard to the different § parts of the Jewish Scriptures; what shall we say concerning the Scriptures of the new and eternal covenant? What shall we say concerning those discourses of our blessed Saviour, recorded in the Gospels, of which he himself speaks more forcibly, than

* John xvi. 13.

* Luke xvi. 17.

† 2 Pet. i. 21.

‡ Mark xii. 36.

§ A particular account of the books of the old Testament is given by Eusebius from Josephus, and from Origen. See in Eusebius's Eccl. Hist the account from Josephus, l. iii. c. 10; and from Origen, l. vi. c. 25. These Books of the Old Testament were divided into the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa: the last of these three divisions includes the Psalms, Proverbs, &c.

of the Law, declaring ^b “ that Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but his word shall not pass away ? ” What shall we say concerning those passages of the Epistles which are expressly said to have been spoken by the Lord ? And what concerning numberless other passages both in the Gospels and Epistles, which are undistinguished from the rest, and foretell things to come or relate things past with a precision, for which it is impossible to account, except by ascribing it to that Divine Spirit who was to teach the Apostles and bring to their remembrance remote occurrences ? But, we must not confine ourselves to particular passages of the New Testament. St. Paul ^c asserts that “ all Scripture was given by Inspiration.” St. Peter ^d classes St. Paul’s writings among the Scriptures ; and says they were delivered ^e “ by the wisdom given unto him.” And if this wisdom, or “ the ^f Spirit of truth was ” (according to our Saviour’s promise) “ to abide for ever with his Disciples ; ” how shall we not say of all their writings, what St. Paul says of his own, “ that they are ^g the commandments of the Lord : ” and what exceptions dare we make to the universal

^b Mark xiii. 31.

^d 2 Pet. iii. 16.

^f John xiv. 16, 17.

^c 2 Tim. iii. 16.

^e 2 Pet. iii. 15.

^g 1 Cor. xiv. 37.

Inspiration

Inspiration of the subject-matter at least of Scriptures, delivered under such circumstances, save those which the writers themselves have made ?

On this immoveable ^h foundation of truth and divine Inspiration Christianity erected itself and went on to increase. Communities of Christians were formed ; regulations were instituted for their internal government ; and ⁱ Bishops immediately appointed and provision

^h From Ignatius's Epistle to the Philadelphians (c. 7.) it appears that the extraordinary Inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the first ages of Christianity was not confined to the writers of the new Testament exclusively. He says, when extorting them to adhere to their Bishops, their body of Presbyters, and their Deacons, “ Οἱ ὀψιστάντες (forſitan υποπτευſάντες) με ὡς προϊδοῦσά τοι μεριſμον τινῶν λεγείν ταῦτα· μαρτυρῶ δὲ μοι ἐν ᾧ δίδωμαι ὅτι ἀποſαρμὸς ἀνδρωπιότης ἐκ ἐγῶν. Το δὲ πνεῦμα ἐκῆρυσσε λεγῶν ταῦτ' κ τ λ. In the ſame manner he ſays to the Ephesians (Epiſt. c. 20.) that he would inſtruct them in ſome points, “ μαλιſτὰ εἶν ὁ Κυριὸς μοῦ ἀποκκλιῦν.”

ⁱ Clemens Romanus, the Fellow-labourer of St. Paul, ſays “ Καὶ οἱ ἀποſτολοὶ ἡμῶν ἐγγῶσαν ἄλλα τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριſτοῦ διὰ ἐπιſτῆν ἐπὶ τῆ ονοματοῦ τῆς ἐπιſκοπῆς. Διὰ ταῦτην ἐν τῆν αἰτιαὶν προſ-
“ ἰωſιν εὐληφοῦσῆς τελείαν κατεſτήσαν τῆς προειρημῆνῆς (ſcilicet ἐπιſκο-
“ πῆς ἢ διακονῆς) ἢ μεταξὺ ἐπινομην διδάſκαſιν, ὅπωσ, εἶν κοιμηθῶ-
“ ſιν, διαδεξάνται ἑτέροι διδοκίμαſταίνοι ἀνδρες τῆν λειτουργίαν αὐτῶν.”
Epiſt. 1^{ma}. ad Cor. c. 44.

An account of the nature of the episcopal office in the first century may be ſeen in Moſheim's Eccl. Hiſt. Vol. I. p. 105, &c. Engl. Edit. 1782.

Various paſſages might be cited from Ignatius's genuine Epistles to prove the great ſtreſs which this Diſciple of St. John lays on the Episcopical authority. Indeed, Moſheim ſays of theſe Epistles, “ nulla forte liſ plerisque Ignatianarum Epistoliarum
“ mota fuiſſet, niſi qui pro divino origine et antiquitate guber-
“ nationis episcopalis pugnant, cauſam ſuam ex hiſ fulcire potu-
“ iſſent.” De rebus Chriſtianorum ante Conſtant. p. 160.

Hooker

made for a succession of others, to superintend and enforce these regulations. In the history of the Apostles we read of Churches in Asia and other parts: and among their Epistles we find some, which make express mention of ^k Bishops, Deacons, and Elders, and which were purposely written to instruct and confirm the new Bishops. That these Bishops also were distinguished from the Elders or Presbyters, ^l before the death of John, or very

Hooker goes so far as to challenge the sectaries of his time “to find out but one Church upon the face of the whole earth, that hath been ordered by their discipline, or that hath not been ordered by ours, that is to say by episcopal regiment.” *thence the time of the blessed Apostles were here converted.* Pref. to *Eccl. Pol.* p. 10. Edit. 1666.

See also on this subject *Stillfleet's Orig. Britan.* p. 74—83. *Cave's Histor. Liter.* Vol. I. p. 42. *Heylyn's Reformation justified*, p. 202 and 251. *Collier's Eccl. Hist.* Vol. II. p. 617. and *Bingham's Antiquities of the Christian Church*, b. ii. c. 1. Fol. Edit. 1726. What Lord Chancellor King says on episcopal Government in his “*Enquiry into the constitution, &c. of the Primitive Church*” is well answered by a Presbyter of the Church of England in a book, entitled “*an original Draught of the Primitive Church*” and published in the year 1717. An answer to it may also be found in *Bishop Smalldridge's Sermons*, Fol. p. 107—112.

^k 1 Tim. Chapters 3d and 5th.

^l Chillingworth informs us in his “*Apostolical Institution of Episcopacy demonstrated*” (which is comprised in four pages) that *Petrus Molinæus* in a book, purposely written in defence of the Presbyterian government, acknowledgeth “that presently after the Apostles' times, or even in their time (as ecclesiastical history witnesseth) it was ordained that in every city one of the Presbytery should be called a Bishop, who should have Preeminence over his colleagues to avoid confusion which oft times ariseth out of equality. And truly this form of government all Churches every where received.” Chillingworth adds

soon after this event, the most zealous friends of the Presbyterian form of Church government allow. And while the distinction is allowed at this so early a period, no sufficient argument has ever been offered to prove that it was only then introduced, and that it was not rather at that time an acknowledged and necessary consequence of the institutions originally determined and enforced by the Apostles.

The first Bishops fell little short of the Apostles in zeal and integrity. These holy men, having extended to the utmost of their abilities the knowledge of the truth, taught their converts by their own Example to live according to the doctrines of their profession, and by the same persuasive motive taught them also to crown a well-spent life by a death of pious fortitude.

How far the successors of the Apostles in the pastoral care of the Church succeeded

adds that another great defender of the Presbytery Theodorus Beza confesseth in effect the same thing. He also subjoins in a Note the concessions of two other writers from Geneva: referring his readers at length for fuller proofs to Dr. Hammond's Dissertations against Blondel, which he says "were never answered and never will." See Chillingworth's Safe-Way, &c. — P. 321. 4th Edit. London 1674.

^m Walo Messalinus de Episcopis et Presbyteris (8vo. p. 253. Lugd. Bat. 1641) says that the distinction arose about the beginning or middle of the second Century. And Blondel in his Apol. pro sententia Hieronymi (Preface, p. 11. Amstelodami 1646) makes it commence about the year 135.

ⁿ See Chillingworth's Safe-Way, p. 324.

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them also in equal, or even in similar, powers of supernatural agency, is a question, which the injudicious assertions of the friends, and the artful insinuations of the enemies of Christianity, render it very ° difficult for the present age to determine. But (blessed be the great Contriver and Perfecter of our Salvation !) the determination is not essential to our Faith. Already had the Almighty set his seal to the truth of Christianity. Already had those miracles of our great Redeemer and his original disciples, which are recorded in holy Writ, and which admit of proof in every age, laid deep the foundation of that Religion, against which the gates of Hell were never to prevail. It appears to have been ° necessary that we should have the means of proving that our blessed Saviour authenticated his pretensions

° Jortin says, “ I would not engage for the truth of any of the miracles after the year 107 : but I wish to be classed with the doubters not the deniers.” Rem. on Eccl. Hist. Vol. II. p. 71. He must, however, be supposed here to except the miracle on Julian’s attempt to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem. See Notes on the 6th Sermon.

° Chrysostom says, “ Μη τοις το μη γινεσθαι νυν σημεια τεκ-
 “ μπειον ποιη τα μη γινεσθαι ποτε και γαρ τοτε χρησιμως ενεμετο,
 “ και νυν χρησιμως ου γινεται.” And again, “ νυν απο των θειων γρα-
 “ φων και των τοις σημειων την πιστην ων λεγομεν παρεχομεθα.” Hom. 6.
 in 1 Cor. 2. p. 276. Tom. III. Eton.

So likewise St. Augustin says, “ Accipimus majores nostros
 “ eo gradu fidei, quo a temporalibus ad æterna conscenditur,
 “ visibilia miracula (nec enim aliter poterant) secutos esse : per
 “ quos id actum est ut necessaria non essent posteris.”

De vera Religione, c. 25, Paris 1679.

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by supernatural actions. It was, perhaps, necessary also that we should have means of proving farther that the Apostles, who were the witnesses of his resurrection and ascension, attracted the respect and commanded the belief of mankind by the power, with which they were endued from on high. But, no reason has ever been assigned, why we should be enabled to prove that miracles were performed by Christians in any succeeding age, which will not apply also to the present times. Not that it is my intention to question any authentic facts of this nature, which are recorded; much less to give up, as fictions of pious fraud, all the relations of subsequent miracles. It is my intention merely to assert that these miracles are not at present ³ essential to the vindication of Christianity: and if we have not sufficient arguments to establish the credit of those among them, which are genuine; it ought to be referred to the expiration of the period for which they were designed. They were designed to make up for the want of general information concerning the nature and evidences of our Religion, which must have

³ "With any other miracles" (than those of Christ and his Apostles) "however numerous, however confidently asserted or plausibly set forth we have nothing to do. There may have been ten thousand impostures of this sort."

Hurd's Lincoln's Inn Sermons, Vol. II. p. 79-

been in an eminent degree the irremediable misfortune of numberless individuals in its early ages: they were designed also to comfort and support the Christians of those ages ~~under~~ under their peculiar circumstances of distress. Being to us, therefore, in both those respects unnecessary, they have for that reason descended with a less decisive weight of evidence.

But whatever were the assistances afforded to the early Pastors of the Church, they appear to have made an active use of their powers, whether natural or inspired. They converted great numbers every where to the Faith: and

† Justin Martyr tells Trypho, “ οὐδε ἐν γὰρ ὅλως ἐστὶ τὸ γένος ἀν-
 “ θρωπῶν, εἴτε βάρβαρων, εἴτε Ἑλλήνων, εἴτε ἀπλῶς ὀπιτισίουνοματι προσ-
 “ αγορευομένων, ἢ ἀμαξοβῶτων ἢ αἰοικῶν καλουμένων, ἢ ἐν σκηναῖς κτηνώρο-
 “ φων οἰκουμένων, ἐν οἷς μὴ διὰ τὴν ὀνόματος τῶν σαυρωθέντος Ἰησοῦ εὐχῆς καὶ
 “ εὐχαριστίας τῶ πατρὸς καὶ ποιητῆ τῶν ὅλων γίνονται,” p. 345. Edit.
 Par. 1615. An enumeration of the nations by which Christiani-
 nity was received in Tertullian’s Time may be seen in his Trea-
 tise adverst. Judæos, c. 7. which he concludes in this very re-
 markable manner. “ Christi autem regnum et nomen ubique
 “ porrigitur, ubique creditur, ab omnibus gentibus supernume-
 “ ratis colitur, ubique regnat, ubique adoratur, omnibus ubique
 “ tribuitur æqualiter: non regis apud illum major gratia, non
 “ Barbari alicujus inferior lætitia, non dignitatum aut natalium
 “ cujusquam discreta merita, omnibus æqualis, omnibus rex,
 “ omnibus judex, omnibus Deus et Dominus est.” Eusebius
 says on the same subject that Christian Churches were erected
 “ ἐκ ἐν ἀδηλοῖς πᾶσι καὶ ἀφανέσι τοποῖσι, ἀλλ’ ἐν ταῖς μαλίστα διαπρετεσ-
 “ ταιαῖς πόλεσιν ἰδρυθεῖσαι: ἐπ’ αὐτῆς λέγω τῆς Ῥωμαίων βασιλευσῆς,
 “ ἐπὶ τῆς Ἀλεξανδρείῃ, καὶ Ἀντιοχείῃ, καὶ ὅλης τῆς Αἰγυπτῆς,
 “ καὶ Λιβύης, Ἐυρώπῃς τε καὶ Ἀσίας, ἐν τε κωμαῖς τε καὶ χωραῖς, καὶ
 “ παντοίοις ἔθνεσι.” Dem. Evang. l. iii. p. 138.

See also the citation above made from p. 112. of the same work. Arnobius likewise says, “ Vel hæc saltem nobis faciant ar-
 “ gumenta credendi quod jam per omnes terras, in tam brevi
 “ tempore

if the unaffected piety and zeal of such converts to Christianity in the three first centuries, and the want of these qualities in its subsequent professors, be considered; it will, perhaps, not be thought a violation of charity to doubt whether there was not more Christian virtue in the world before the expiration of those centuries, than detractors from the number and integrity of the early professors of our Religion can prove to have existed at any future period. But let not the suggestion of such a doubt be supposed to carry with it any insinuation that the early Christians were exempt from all the bad consequences of the depravity of human nature. Both the censures and the exhortations of the Apostolical Epistles prove the contrary, even with regard to the Apostles' own age. And the same appears to

“ tempore et parvo, immensi nominis hujus sacramenta diffusa
 “ sunt, quod nulla jam natio est tam barbari moris quæ non ejus
 “ amore versa molliverit.” Adv. Gentes. l. ii. p. 44.

With regard to Heathen authorities concerning the extensive propagation of Christianity in its early ages see the passages adduced by Dr. Powell from Suetonius, Dio, Julian, Tacitus, Pliny, &c. Sermon X, p. 154—162.

See, moreover, on this subject Stillingfleet's Orig. Britan. p. 54.

^s See concerning the characters of the Christians in the first ages what Cave says in the fourth chapter of his “ Primitive Christianity;” and what he urges at large, in the remaining parts of this work, on the manner in which they discharged their Duty towards God, themselves, and their neighbours.

have been the case in an increasing and ' alarming degree, as we advance nearer to the reign of Constantine. However, it was by no means the case in any degree, to be compared with the habitual profligacy, which has since prevailed among Christians, and discovered itself by continued prevalences both of fraudulent superstition and of sceptical indifference.

Nor were the early pastors less anxious to defend, than to enlarge, their care. On all sides grievous wolves entered in, not sparing the flock. * Perverse brethren distracted the minds of the weak : and cruel adversaries from without assaulted not only the Faith, but also the lives of those who called on the name of Christ. While, however, the common enemy was ready to destroy every professor of Christianity ; it was not probable that there should be many pretended converts to this Religion : and among its sincere members less was to be feared from dissention of opinion. Though, therefore, the spiritual pastor was not exempt

* Eusebius says of the Christian Church about the year 300, " ως εκ της επι πλεον ελευθεριας επι χαννοτητα και κωδριαν τα καθ' ημας μετηλλατ'ετο, αλλων αλλοις διαφθονεμενων και διαλοιδορημενων και μονονηχι ημων αυτων ταυτοις προσπολεμεντων οπλοις, ει ετω τυχοι, και δρασι τοις δια λογων' αρχοντων τε αρχισι προσρηγυστων, και λαων επι λαης καταφασιαζοντων." Eccl. Hist. l. viii. c. 1.

^u See Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. l. iv. c. 22.

See also in the same Hist. l. v. c. 20. an account of Irenæus' zeal in refuting heresies.

from

from much anxious labor in securing his flock from internal heresy; it must at this early period have been his principal care to guard it against the foreign enemy. Accordingly, attempts were made at different times to obviate the slander, and to disarm the malice, of the Heathen world by translations of the Scriptures, and by representations, in numerous ^w apologies, of the true principles of Christianity. These exertions did, indeed, at particular times produce the desired effect: but the cessation of persecution, which they produced, was usually of very short continuance. It was ^x inferred before the commencement of

^w Quadratus and Aristides wrote apologies for the Christian Religion and addressed them to Adrian.

Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. l. iv. c. 3.

Various other apologies were written at different times on the same subject. Those of Athenagoras and Melito compared with the apologies of Tertullian and Justin Martyr have greatly the advantage. Jortin says the latter are the performances of very clowns compared with the former—Note on his Rem. on Eccl. Hist. Vol. II. p. 85

^x Sulpicius Severus, who died about the beginning of the fifth century, says “Etenim sacris vocibus decem plagis mundum afficiendum pronunciatum est.” Sac. Hist. l. ii. c. 48. p. 370. 8^o. Ed. 1665.

Augustine and Orosius, according to the opinions of their times, refer for Scriptural prefigurations on the subject either to the ten plagues of Egypt or the ten oppositions which Moses encountered from the Egyptians. Augustine enumerates the dates of ten persecutions of the Christians before the Time of Constantine and says: “plagas enim Ægyptiorum quoniam decem fuerunt antequam inde exire inciperet populus Dei, putant “ ad hunc intellectum esse referendas, ut novissima Antichristi “ persecutio similis videatur undecimæ plagæ qua Ægyptii, dum

the fifth century from figurative and fanciful explanations of Scripture that ten general persecutions were to befall the Church. Hence persecutions have been magnified or extenuated, as might best serve to mark out with distinction the number which was to be completed. And hence also modern Sceptics have been led to question the reality of every such extraordinary persecution. But the consequences, which have ensued from injudicious inferences of the professors of our Religion in its degenerate days, cannot warrant us in rejecting the true history of its best and most disinterested members; or in giving up the argument, which arises in its favour from the extensive sufferings of its early professors. That there were general and grievous perse-

“*hostiliter sequerentur Hebræos in mari rubro, — perierunt.*”
De Civitat. Dei, l. xviii. c. 52. Orosius recounts the ten persecutions after Augustine and says explicitly, “*Decem ibi contradictiones adversus Moysen, hic decem edicta adversus Christum,*” *l. vii. c. 27. p. 533.* Ed. Haverchampi.

Besides the part of Scripture, thus referred to by Augustine and Orosius, others refer, but without better foundation, to *Rev. xvii. 12—14.* See on this subject Mosheim, *Vol. I. p. 72.*

† S. Severus says, p. 368. “*Certatim in gloriosa certamina ruebatur, multoque avidius tum martyria gloriosis mortibus quærebantur, quam nunc Episcopatus pravis ambitionibus appetuntur.*”

‡ “*The wonderful behaviour of the ancient Christians may justly be accounted a proof of the truth of our Religion; and we should deserve to be blamed and despised, if we parted with it and gave it up tamely on account of a few objections.*”

Jortin’s *Remarks on Eccl. Hist. Vol. II. p. 149.*

cutions

cutions of the early Christians the ^a best-informed writers declare. These persecutions also continued in a greater or less degree from their first ^b commencement to the civil establishment of Christianity. Intolerance, once raised among Heathen nations to the extravagance of inflicting the most cruel death on the peaceable professors of a Religion, the most pure, and the most strict in requiring its followers to abstain from the rites of idolatrous worshippers, and to endeavour by every means to convert them to the service of the living God, could not be expected to subside for any considerable time, while the civil power continued in opposition to the truth, and the same difference of religious opinion was zealously maintained. It might, indeed, at times be restrained by the interposition of humanity, or the justice of public authority. But superstition, being always ready to crush its enemies by force in proportion as it is unable to defend itself by reason, would eagerly embrace every opportunity of returning to persecution. Accordingly, we find that it was not sufficient

^a Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny, and others, whose names may be seen in the Prolegomena to Cave's Hist. Liter. p. 38. See also on this subject at large Eusebius Eccl. Hist. l. viii. c. 1—14. and Cave's Primitive Christianity, Vol. I. p. 195. 3d Ed.

^b The persecutions of Christians commenced under Nero—S. Severus, p. 350.

for the Roman Emperours on particular occasions to repeal the laws enacted against Christians ; they were compelled ^c farther to decree severe penalties against their accusers. So forward was the zeal of Polytheism to bring to punishment the deserters or the despisers of its public institutions. But it was only for short intervals that the accusation of an innocent Christian was deemed criminal. During the reign of some of the most celebrated Emperours it was regarded, as highly meritorious. And though from the extraordinary blaze of particular persecutions, some countenance may be given to a numerical partition of them ; yet it may safely be asserted that Christianity was in a ^d general state of persecution from the days of Nero to those of Constantine, and that this cruelty was rather remitted at particular times, than the toleration of our Religion disturbed by any number of temporary persecutions. Nor shall we have any doubt that it may be safely thus asserted, when we consider the influence of large bodies of men, and that the Roman ^e Senate as a body was never fa-

^c This was done by Adrian and Antoninus Pius.

Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. iv. c. 9. 13.

See also S. Severus, p. 365.

^d See Stillingfleet's Orig. Britan. p. 56.

^e " Marcus Aurelius and other Emperors not void of good qualities oppressed the Christians to gain the esteem of the Senate ; who, as a body, were never favourable to Christianity." Jortin's Rem. Vol. II. p. 172.

vourable

vourable to Christianity. The suspension of these persecutions, upon representations of the real principles of Christianity, proves that their violence was often owing to the malicious and ignorant slanders of its enemies; and towards the conclusion, of none, perhaps, more than of Celsus.

But, however much we may deplore the distresses in which the early Christians were involved from the prevailing ignorance of their Religion; there were other evils derived from the same source, which ought not in the present times to be passed over, less noticed, or less lamented. It has been insultingly asked by modern ^f unbelievers whence it happened that so many of the wisest and most virtuous Heathens of those early ages remained unconverted to Christianity? These Heathens paid no serious attention to the evidences of our Religion. The Christian sect (as we are ^g informed by an inhabitant of Rome) was every where spoken against: and from thence its pretensions were not fairly examined. “The religious tenets of the Galileans or Christians,” Mr. Gibbon ^h declares, “were never made a subject of punishment nor even of inquiry.” And farther he himself ⁱ allows the Christians

^f See Gibbon's Hist. Vol. I. p. 516. ^g Acts xxviii. 32.

^h History Vol. I. p. 537.

ⁱ Ibid. p. 537.

to be “the friends of mankind;” though Tacitus^k informs us that the Romans considered them in a diametrically opposite light: “that the Romans condemned them not so much for the crime of setting fire to the city, as for their hatred of mankind.” Tacitus, therefore, at once supplies us with a proof of the ignorance of the Romans with regard to the Christians, and with a presumptive proof also of such a prejudice in this people against them from their^l supposed hatred of mankind, as must effectually indispose all, who were influenced by it, for any proper inquiry into their Religion. In reality, the Jews and Christians were either^l confounded together

^k Annal. l. xv. c. 44.

^l This appears from what Suetonius says of the expulsion of the Jews (or Christians) from Rome: “Judæos, impulso Chresto, assidue tumultuantes Romæ expulit.” In Vita Claudii, c. 25.

The same appears to have been the case also with regard to the Jews and Egyptians. Mr. Hume asserts (Note on his Essays, Vol. II. p. 461) “that ancient writers of the greatest genius (Tacitus and Suetonius) were not able to observe any difference between the Egyptian and the Jewish Religion.” If so; how miserably ignorant must they have been on the subject? And what opinion must Tacitus have had of the Christians, whom he probably did not separate from the Jews; when he joins the latter with the Egyptians and says — “Actum et de sacris Egyptiis Judaicisque pellendis; factumque patrum Consultum ut quatuor millia libertini generis ea superstitione infecta, queis idonea ætas, in insulam Sardiniam veherentur coercendis illic latrocinii, et si ob gravitatem cœli interissent, vile damnum: Cæteri cederent Italia nisi certam ante diem profanos ritus exuissent?” Ann. l. ii. c. 85.

at this period, or at farthest thought sects of the same Religion: and the charge of ignorance and superstition, with which the Jews had ever been branded, was indiscriminately applied to both. It was, therefore, thought needless by Heathen pride to examine into the evidences of a Religion, which it was every where taken for granted was false. And the same contemptuous ^m indifference with regard to the disputes of Jews and Christians about words, and names, and their law; which Gallio, ⁿ Seneca's brother, openly professed when he was Deputy of Achaia, was the common method of treating Christianity among the philosophers of those days. We have a remarkable proof of this in the younger Pliny's well-known Epistle to Trajan. No mention occurs throughout the whole of any inquiry, which had been made into the foundation of the Christian Religion. Nothing farther had at all been inquired into, than the behaviour of its professors. Of this Pliny was called upon to take cognizance, as a civil magistrate. Even to have examined into the general pretensions of their Religion might have appeared to admit the possibility, at least, of its truth: a concession, humiliating to the pride of a

^m Acts xviii. 15.

ⁿ Tacit. Annal. l. xv. c. 73.

philosopher,

° philosopher, and dangerous to the interests of a dependant on a Heathen court. Without any such examination, therefore, he professes at once “ ° that he had not the least doubt, “ that, whatever were their confession, their “ stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy ought “ certainly to be punished.” Indeed, the very names, by which the Heathen writers distinguish Christianity afford abundant proof of their ignorance of it. Who, that knows any thing of the real nature of our Religion, can think when ° Pliny calls it “ Superstitio prava “ et immodica,” ° Tacitus “ exitiabilis Super- “ stitio,” and Suetonius “ ° Superstitio nova “ et malefica ;” that they had at all enquired into the Religion, which they thus malevolently and erroneously ° characterize? And what reasonable man can join with the unbelievers above alluded to in “ expecting that the miraculous appearances of nature, recorded in the Scriptures of our Religion, should, if true,

° See Bp. Warburton's Julian, p. 22.

° Neque dubitabam, quaecumque esset quod faterentur, per-
vicaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri.”

° Epist. l. x. Ep. 97.

° Annal. l. xv. c. 44.

° In Nerone, c. 16.

° See concerning the different calumnies, which were thus propagated with regard to Christianity and its professors, the passages cited at large from the Apologists and various other early writers in the four first chapters of Cave's “ primitive Christianity.”

° See Gibbon's Hist. V. I. p. 518.

be mentioned by such writers ; any more than that they should themselves become its converts ? Especially too, as we know that these are not the only remarkable circumstances of * Eastern history, which European writers have passed over in silence. We know that they say nothing even of the † existence of cities of Syria the most magnificent that imagination can conceive. But, indeed, what comparison can there ever be between the silence of remote and inattentive philosophers and the positive testimony of eye-witnesses ?

If any actual enquiry into these and the other miracles of Christianity be supposed to have been made by the writers in question ;

* The darkness at our Saviour's crucifixion appears to have been a circumstance confined to Eastern history. For the † (Matt. xxvii. 45.) over which it was spread, does not necessarily include more than the land of Judæa. And there also it was by no means total ; since, at the time when the miracle was wrought, it did not hinder the persons around the cross from seeing our Saviour and each other distinctly. Bp. Warburton in his Julian observes (p. 69, 70.) on a Jewish writer, who says that at the time of the defeat of Julian's attempt to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem " there was an earthquake over all the Earth : " " The Historian's calling it an earthquake over all the earth is " in the language of the Jews, and the same with that of the " Evangelist who tells us that at the crucifixion there was darkness over all the earth."

† Volney says " that Balbec is mentioned only by one writer John of Antioch who attributes the building of it to Antoninus Pius, Travels Engl. Edit. Vol. II. p. 245.—And that the world had very confused ideas of the power and grandeur, which Palmyra had possessed : " They were scarcely even suspected in Europe till towards the end of the last century." Vol. II. p. 277.

their

their silence will in that case become a powerful argument in its favour. Surely, if they enquired into the miraculous proofs of our Religion; they either found those proofs fictitious, or not. If fictitious; many reasons may be assigned why they should expose the fiction to the world, whether they were good or bad men. But if on the contrary they did not find them fictitious; if good men, they must themselves profess the Christian Faith, and thenceforth becoming its advocates expose their testimony to the imputation of partiality: or, if bad men, they would (to act most consistently with worldly Policy) pass the whole over in silence. For, to suppose that a good man should admit the truth of a miracle and not believe the doctrine, which it confirms; or that a bad man should bear witness to a circumstance, which condemns himself, is equally unreasonable. If, therefore, the silence of the unconverted philosopher operate at all with regard to our Religion; it must operate powerfully in its favour.

That before the civil establishment of Christianity there were many Heathen philosophers, distinguished by such a conversion to its belief, as might be expected from the enquiries of those good men among them, who did not find its evidences fictitious, is ⁷ in-

⁷ See Arnobius Adv. Gentes, l. ii. p. 44.
disputable.

disputable. Their enquiries also were often excited in a manner, the most creditable to our Religion. In the schools of their celebrated Leaders these philosophers had been instructed concerning the excellency of virtue, and had heard of its superiority to all worldly affliction and even to death itself. But the schools, which they frequented, could supply them only with the ^a theory of this heroism. When, therefore, they saw their admired speculations realized in Christian Martyrs; when they saw illiterate crouds press forward with eagerness to meet sufferings, which it would have been the most ardent wish of other men to avoid; when they saw also that stedfastness in suffering, which they had before thought to be more than human, display itself in ^a women and children; they were divested of the common ^b prejudices against the sufferers,

^a Plato is supposed to have obscured his doctrines that he might not fall under the Sentence of Socrates. And Aristotle is known to have fled from Athens for the same reason. See Origen against Celsus, l. i. c. 65. — Paris. 1733.

^a See Dodwell De fortitudine Martyrum, in his 12th dissertation on St. Cyprian.

^b Justin Martyr says, “ Αυτος εγω τοις Πλατωνος χαλεπων διδασκασι διαβαλλομενες ακων Χριστιανες, ορων δε και αφοβος προς θανατον και παντα τα κομιζομενα φοβηρα, γενουση αδυνατον ειναι εν κακια και φιληθονια υπαρχειν αυτες· τις γαρ φιληθονος η ακρατης και ανθρωπιων σαρκων βοραι ηθεμιμος αγαθος, δυναιτ’ αν θανατον ασπαζεσθαι οπως των αυτη αγαθων γενηθη, κ. τ. λ. ” Justin’s 1st Apol. p. 50. edit. Par. 1615. See also Lactantius de Justit. l. v. c. 13.

and, led to enquire into the foundation of this unusual fortitude. And their enquiries, thus ultimately directed to the miraculous evidences of our Religion, often ended in a profession of ~~the~~ Faith and a display of the same fortitude. Such was the conversion of Tertullian; and such was the conversion and glorious death also of Justin Martyr.

From some, indeed, of these converts arose evils of the most serious consequence to Christianity. The prejudices, incident to human nature, suffered not all the new and philosophical believers in our Religion to sacrifice the learning of their schools to its solemn, but simple, truths. Hence numerous sects of both Gnostic and Platonic Christians, or of Christians who mingled human knowledge of different kinds with divine Revelation in their religious tenets: hence Revelation was wrested to support fanciful conjectures, heresies were introduced,

^c Tertullian says of the sufferings of Christians, " *Quis enim non contemplatione ejus concurritur ad requirendum quid in- tus in re sit? Quis non, ubi requisivit, accedit? Ubi accessit, pati exoptet?* Apol. ad finem.

^d See an account of Justin Martyr's death in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* l. iv. c. 16.

^e Mr. Bingham says that the term "Gnostic" was originally applied in a good sense to Christians, as to those who were possessed of the best knowledge; but that it was afterwards aped and abused by others. *Antiquities*, b. i. c. 1. Sect. 3.

^f Jortin observes that most of the ancient heresies were a mixture of philosophy, Greek or Oriental, and Christianity—*Remarks*, Vol. II. p. 266. And again, "the philosophers who
" passed

the peace of the infant Church disturbed, and a foundation laid for those numberless dissensions, which added (as was before remarked) to the anxiety of Christian Pastors during the time of persecution, and prevented them in future ages from enjoying the happy effects of toleration and establishment.

That a very considerable proportion of the converts to Christianity during the three first centuries consisted, notwithstanding, of men of illiterate education can be no discredit to that Religion, of which it was a distinguishing mark that "the poor had the Gospel preached unto them." The Apostles and their successors, in general, were men of this sort. They were, in general, remarkable neither for their learning, nor for their eloquence. They express the most pious sentiments in the most simple language, and the most important truths without ornament. But, the piety of their sentiments and the truth of their doctrines were sufficient under Providence to make their Religion prevail: and, in spite of all opposition, it continued in successive ages to prevail with the mass of mankind by the con-

" passed from Judaism and Paganism to Christianity corrupted
 " the simplicity of the Gospel, turned it into a contentious Re-
 " ligion, and filled it with unedifying speculations."

Vol. II. p. 273.

viſion of ^b honest and humble attention; till those great men, who were not to be allured by its own excellence, found it expedient from worldly motives to come over to its side; being influenced in this most important of all concerns by the conduct of an illiterate multitude, and not by the discoveries of their own superior ^b wisdom. This is the great argument, which is inferred in favour of our Religion from its peculiar mode of propagation. The argument is not inferred from any number of wise, or powerful men, who embraced Christianity in this or that place at any given time; but from the triumph which it obtained over the wisdom and power of the world by a process, contrary to what was ever observed in the success of any other institution. The foolish things of the world were chosen ⁱ to confound the wise and the weak to confound the mighty.

But, in reality, the truth of Christianity, and the satisfaction resulting from a conviction of that truth, are very little concerned in the enquiries, which at present form a considerable part of ecclesiastical history during the first ages of our Religion: in enquiries concerning

^b See the Introduction to Bp. Warburton's Julian, p. 26.

^b See the same, p. 25.

ⁱ 1 Cor. i. 27.

the miracles ascribed to the successors of the Apostles, concerning the extent of the early propagation of our Religion, the extent of the persecution of its professors, and the reasons from the beginning why it was not generally received by men of learning and why universal mention was not made by them of its miraculous proofs. These are subjects, on which the enemies of our Faith have been able to avail themselves of the errors, the omissions, and other imperfections, of its friends as well as foes. With them, therefore, these are favourite topics of declamation; and from thence they necessarily make a part of those subsequent observations on the history of our Religion, which are intended to vindicate its truth.

It is sufficient with regard to the original propagation of Christianity; at least, indeed, it is sufficient for our satisfaction, as far as the foundation of our Faith is concerned in this important part of our history; if we are informed — that the publication of our Religion was entrusted, after the ascension of its great Author, to poor and illiterate men, who had been his Disciples and witnesses from the beginning: — that these men were enabled by supernatural means to confirm the truth of their doctrines, and to preach the Gospel to all

nations:—that their industry was proportioned to the importance of their commission, and to their means of overcoming the difficulties by which they were opposed:—that numbers were converted by their preaching:—that, by the miracles performed before the expiration of the apostolical age, by the writings of the New in addition to those of the Old Testament, and by institutions appointed for the public profession of our Religion, provision was made for its regular and permanent maintenance among its converts, and for the conversion of men of every age to its belief, without the aid and in opposition to all the efforts of human power and human wisdom:—and that all those, who were thus employed at first to publish and confirm the doctrines of Christianity, having before given up every prospect in this world for its sake, at length, when brought to the ^k trial, cheerfully laid down their lives in attestation of its truth; leaving to latest posterity the most unequivocal assurance of the reality of the miraculous events, recorded by them in the New Testament, which had been the objects of their senses and the original foundation of their faith. Few as these circumstances are, they comprehend in reality all the information con-

^k Every one of them was actually brought to the trial, except St. John. See the passage above cited from Stillingfleet's Orig. Sac. p. 275.

cerning the first propagation of our Religion, which reasonable men can think necessary for the confirmation of its truth. As to all other miracles besides those which are recorded in Holy Writ, they are not to be reckoned (as hath been fully declared) among the present proofs of our Religion. And though strong arguments may be drawn in its favour from the extent of its early propagation, and from the extent of the persecution which it overcame; even these are not to be considered as absolutely necessary to our cause. The various errors, whether with regard to fictitious miracles or ill-founded representations of other sorts, which were intermingled with the history of our Religion by its advocates, and the diversified opposition and contempt which it encountered from its enemies, prove only, what we every day experience, that Christianity may be defended with little judgement, and that the most gracious offers may be rejected and insulted.

Such, however, as they are above sketched, are the occurrences (whether they are all essential to the confirmation of our faith or not) which form the principal outlines of the Christian history from its publication after the resurrection of Christ to its establishment by

Constantine. During a period of nearly 300 years, our Religion, having been openly professed under the institutions originally appointed for its maintenance, was exposed to all those calamities, which arise from the malice of powerful enemies, and from imperfections of various kinds in misguided friends. But, under every ^m disadvantage, its intrinsic purity and external evidences, aided by the influence of the Holy Spirit, made it go on and gain strength; till Constantine, encouraged and; perhaps, persuaded by the ⁿ number of his Christian subjects, proclaimed himself a convert and guardian of Christianity. From his time, notwithstanding the apostacy of one succeeding Emperour and the profligacy of many more,

^b See Jos. Mede's discourse concerning Churches: Works, Book 2d, Edit. 1672:—and Cave's "Primitive Christianity."
^m "Ecclesiastical history will shew us the amazing progress
 " of Christianity through the Roman empire, through the East
 " and through the West, during the three first centuries: tho'
 " the powers of this world strenuously opposed it; tho' po-
 " verty and infamy, distress and oppression, the loss of friends,
 " property, liberty, and life were often the lot of its profes-
 " sors." Jortin's 2d Charge, Sermons, Vol. VII. p. 382.

ⁿ Cave proves by a citation from Optatus that in the reign of Dioclesian there were above forty Basilicæ or Churches in Rome only. Cave's Primitive Christianity, Vol. I. p. 133.

And Dr. Powell says, in opposition to many of our modern writers, that "when Constantine ascended the throne the Christian party was equal, perhaps superior, to their adversaries through the whole Empire." 10th Sermon, p. 165.

we may affirm that Kings became its ^onursing fathers and Queens its nursing mothers. Having raised itself to the favourable attention of Princes by the possession, which it had before taken of their subjects' hearts, it has thenceforth received protection from them ; and has itself, in return, protected both their persons and authority.

. ^o If. xlix. 23.

S E R M O N I I I.

1 P E T. III. 15.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man, that asketh you a reason of the Hope that is in you.

THE present discourse is to carry our observations on the history of our Religion from the establishment of it by Constantine to the commencement of the Reformation.

The establishment of our holy Religion by Constantine without doubt filled the minds of its sincere professors with the purest joy. Whoever considered the excellence of the Religion itself, and the protection which it was now to receive from the civil power, might well be led with pious fervour to imagine that the blessings, with which it was ushered in, were thenceforth to receive their accomplishment: that thenceforth ^a glory would be given to God in the highest, and that on earth there

^a Luke ii. 14.

would

would be peace and good will towards men. And, indeed, to this period ^b is referred the glorious triumph of the Church, celebrated in the seventh Chapter of the Revelation of St. John. But the depravity of the human heart from the beginning opposed itself to its remedy, and infected not only the unlearned part of Christians, but the teachers of Christianity themselves; thus making way for general and permanent corruptions. Among the Apostles we have a Judas Iscariot. In the ages immediately subsequent, and among the rulers also of the Church, arose men of perverse minds and totally unworthy of their sacred station. But, the number of unworthy rulers, no less than the general number of insincere and unworthy professors of our Religion, was restrained in the early ages by persecution, and is small, when compared with the swarms of both, which under the future and peaceable state of the Church were more zealous to partake of its ^c emoluments, than to promote in any respect its spiritual interests. As soon as Bishops were ^d elected by intrigues

^b See Bp. Newton on the prophecies, Vol. III. p. 74—77.

^c S. Severus, p. 368. Stillingfleet's Orig. Britan. p. 178.

^d This censure ought not to be equally applied to all the Bishops of this period. When Ammianus Marcellinus speaks of the manner of obtaining Bishopricks, and of the luxury of Bishops; he says there was a very great difference between the Bishops of cities and those of provinces. "Neque ego abnuo ostentatio-

"nem

and embarked in the support of factions, neither the qualifications for their high rank, nor a proper demeanour in it, were any longer the usual and distinguishing parts of their character. Different Princes contended for temporal power; and different Bishops grasped as contentiously at each others ecclesiastical jurisdiction. One pernicious consequence of these contests is to be lamented in the want of purity, which during the contention and in succeeding times prevailed throughout the Christian world. The profession of Christianity was, indeed, extended. The conversion of many nations was begun long after the Christian establishment by Constantine. Among many nations also, which had before partially professed the Christian Faith, much was done to render the profession of it universal. But,

“nem rerum considerans urbanarum, hujus rei cupidos ob impetrandum quod appetunt omni contentione laterum jungari debere: quum id adepti futuri sunt ita securi ut ditentur oblationibus matronarum, procedantque vehiculis infidentes, circumspicte vestiti, epulas curantes profusas, adeo ut eorum convivia regales superant mensas. Qui esse poterant beati re vera, si, magnitudine urbis despecta quam vitiis opponunt, ad imitationem antistitum quorundam provincialium viverent; quos tenuitas edendi potandique parcissime, vilitas etiam indumentorum et supercilia humum spectantia perpetuo numini verisque ejus cultoribus ut puros commendant et verecundos.”
C. xxvii. p. 458. edit. 1558.

^c Eusebius mentions the contests, which prevailed in the Church, “*αρχοντων αρχισι*” before the reign of Constantine, Hist. Eccl. l. viii. c. 1.

the

the fountains from which Christianity flowed being corrupt, we cannot wonder if the doctrines, which were propagated under its authority, should henceforth be impure. Besides a deficiency in enforcing moral duties; even religious doctrines were perverted and made matter of party violence. Heresies of the most pernicious tendency were propagated with cruel persecutions of the contrary Faith: while on the other hand ^b little differences of opinion were at length construed into damnable heresies.

This spirit of contention in the rulers of the Church found no small encouragement and support in the learning of the times. It hath been ^a before remarked that many philosophers were found among the early converts to Christianity. More succeeded them in subsequent ages. In the doctrine of the Trinity, and in the other doctrines of Revelation, which relate to the fall of man and the operation of

^f Arianism was enforced in this manner under Constantius, Valens, &c. And, as Bp. Sherlock observes, it yielded as severe trials to Christians as they had ever before experienced.

Sermons, Vol. III. p. 358.

See on this subject Sozomen, Hist. Eccl. l. vi. c. 18. and Sozocrates, l. iv. c. 16.

^g See the objections urged by Michael Cerularius against the Latin Church, Mosh. Vol. II. p. 556.

^h See the last sermon.

evil spirits, these philosophers found a resemblance to the tenets of their respective schools. When, therefore, they embraced Christianity, they did not think it necessary to relinquish the language of their former tenets; if, indeed, they relinquished all the tenets themselves. From a studiousness to reconcile such language with their new Religion, much curious and typical reasoning was introduced. This reasoning at first served to shelter the prejudices of individuals. It was afterwards regarded as a creditable display of literary

¹ Philo, an Hellenistic Jew of Alexandria, who lived at the same time with the Apostles, and who is said by some to have been an apostate Christian, prepared the way, by his ingenious but fanciful combinations of the Jewish Scriptures with the Platonic philosophy, for similar corruptions of Christianity. Photius says, that he was the writer “*εξ η και σως ο αλληγορικος της γραφης εν εκκλησια λογος ερχεν αρχην εισρησαι.*”

See the part of Photius prefixed to the Paris Edit. of Philo.

See also what Bishop Bull says of Philo: English Works, Vol. III. p. 1126, 8vo.

^j Bishop Horfley's Tracts, 8vo. 1789. p. 68.

^k See what Bishop Warburton says on this subject in the introduction to his “Julian,” where he deduces the corruptions of our Religion in the dark ages “from the adulterate ornaments which the successors of the Apostolic fathers brought from the brothels of philosophy to adorn the sanctity of Religion,” p. 24—34.

^l Clemens Alexandrinus composed his “Stromata” from the Scriptures and Heathen Writers. His own words with regard to his work are very remarkable: “*πυριξεται δε οι Stromataεις αναμειγμενη την αληθειαν τοις φιλοσοφιας δογμασι μαλλον ευκεκαχυμμενη και επικεκρυμμενη, καθαπερ τω λεπτω το εδωλιμον τι καρυε,*” l. i. c. 1.

Tertullian says, “*Ipsæ denique hærefes a philosophia subornantur:*” and again at the conclusion of the same chapter, “*viderint*

attainments. And, as it had been adopted by men of known ^m attachment to Christianity, it was generally thought to detract nothing from the Christian character. This made way for more extensive ⁿ accommodations of

“ viderint qui Stoicum et Platonicum, et Dialecticum Christianismum protulerint.” Adv. Har. c. 7.

In what manner the philosophers of the early ages studied Christianity may be inferred also from what Cave says of them at the Nicene Council, “ ad hunc conventum venisse quosdam philosophos sive dialecticos de rebus theologicis subtiliter disputaturos.” Hist. Liter. Vol. I. p. 351.

^m Such as Clemens Alexandrinus; Cyprian himself was so fond of mystical interpretation, that Cave calls it “ the argument which that good man produces as his warrant to knock down a controversy, when other arguments were too weak to do it.” Prim. Christ. Vol. I. p. 350.

And even Ammonius, the master of Origen, is said to have lived and dyed a Christian. Stillingfleet’s Orig. Sac. p. 501.

ⁿ The Gnostic sect, which began in the days of the Apostles, was extended in the second century by Basilides. He (as Mosheim says, Vol. I. p. 223.) has generally obtained the first place among the Egyptian Gnostics: and is called by Cave “ Gnosticorum antesignanus” (Hist. Lit. Vol. I. p. 49.) He was followed by Valentine, Theodotus the tanner, and many others; among whom Manes “ was so adventurous” (to use the words of Mosheim) “ as to attempt a coalition of the doctrine of the Magi with the Christian system or the explication of the one by the other.” Vol. I. p. 296.

Nor did Origen, who was the leader of the platonizing Christians, derive his speculations from a master, who had been less adventurous in the corruption of Christianity than Manes himself. See Mosheim, Vol. I. p. 169—174. Under Origen the platonizing Christians soon eclipsed their Gnostic brethren. “ A prodigious number of interpreters both in the third century and in the following times pursued the method of Origen; nor could the few, who explained the Scriptures with judgement and a true spirit of criticism, oppose the torrent of Allegory which was overflowing the Church.”—“ Origen illustrated the greatest part of the doctrines of Christianity, or to speak more properly disguised them under the lines of a vain philosophy.” Mosheim, Vol. I. p. 278, 279.

our Religion to human systems, and for such explanations of its particular doctrines, as before its civil establishment had blended almost every tenet of it with the reveries of philosophical speculatists. After its civil establishment these subjects of abuse went on to increase. Philosophical Divinity was enlarged: and the study of philosophy, which was necessary before this Divinity could be understood, was, for that reason, thought essential to Christianity. And though the Platonic system, which it had been the successful aim of ages to incorporate with Christianity, and

° Mosheim says of the fourth century: "Origen was the great model, whom the most eminent of the Christian doctors followed in their explications of the truths of the Gospel, which were of consequence explained according to the rules of the Platonic philosophy, as it was corrected and modelled by that learned father." Vol. I. p. 369.

Under this censure he includes Jerome, Hilary, Eusebius, Ephraim the Syrian, Crystostom, Athanasius, and Didymus.

And so prevalent in these ages was the custom of disguising or secreting the doctrines of Christianity that Cave tell us, Crystostom, in speaking of the mysterious parts of our Religion, uses the words "ἱσασιν οἱ μεμνημένοι" at least 50 times in his writings. Prim. Christ. Vol. I. p. 213. See also on this subject Bingham's Antiquities, b. x. c. 5. sect. 8.

In the following ages the most learned commentators did in general nothing more than transcribe the Divinity of their predecessors. "The greater part of them reasoned and disputed concerning the truths of the Gospel, as the blind would argue about light and colours," &c. Mosh. Vol. II. p. 128. Accounts of them may be seen in different parts of Mosheim's second and third Volumes. See also Jortin's Remarks, Vol. V. p. 152.

which had obscured the philosophy adopted by the Gnostics, was discredited by the condemnation of some of its principal advocates, and was at length abolished by Justinian ; yet did it only make way for the Aristotelic, a philosophy better calculated to promote and regulate theological disputations. The effects of the intermixture of philosophy with Christianity were not easily to be done away. Men had not merely availed themselves of the assistance of human science in the explication of Christianity ; but they had confounded both together, and had produced a jargon of philosophical Divinity, which tended irresistibly to destroy all distinct ideas of each, considered as a separate and independent study. Their minds had been called off from a simple consideration of the doctrines of Revelation : and, however their system might be diverted from ^p Plato to Aristotle, and from Aristotle to St. ^q Augustine, to Peter ^r Lombard, or to any

^p As late as the middle of the 15th century there was a contest whether the doctrines of Plato or Aristotle should be preferred : and Jortin says, “ I much fear it would be doing no wrong to the literati of those days to suppose they had no other esoteric Religion, than what they drew from Plato or Aristotle.” Rem. Vol. V. p. 490.

^q Mosh. Eccl. Hist. Vol. II. p. 424.

^r Dean Tucker in his letters to Dr. Kippis says, “ It is an undoubted fact that Peter Lombard’s *summa sententiarum* was in such high vogue for several ages, as to eclipse the Scriptures themselves.” P. 81.

other

other father or doctor of the Church; their attention was with difficulty afterwards to be attached to the holy Scriptures, and to the pure Religion which they teach. This certainly was an essential cause of those faults, which may be discovered in the venerable writings of the uninspired professors of our Religion in its early ages, and of the various heresies, and the general corruption of Christianity from the days of Ammonius and his scholar Origen down to that scholastic Theology, whose jargon did so much mischief in the Church during the latter part of the dark ages. The professors of Christianity * forsook

* In the prolegomena to Cave's Hist. Lit. p. 2, we are informed "Sacrarum Scripturarum studium contemptui habitum, neglectum, et in lingua vulgari prohibitum. Biblia sacra raro visa, rarius tractata, adeo ut semel iterumque testatur Erasmus se producere posse qui annum egressi octogesimum tantum ætatis in hujusmodi tricis (scilicet Theologia scolastica) perdidierint, nec unquam contextum evangelicum evolverint: idque se propria experientia quin et ipsis etiam factentibus comperisse."

Stafford of Pembroke Hall in Cambridge is said in 1524 to have been the first, who publicly read lectures out of the Scriptures, whereas before they read only the sentences. Strype's memorials, Vol. I. p. 48. Consistently with this Erasmus says, "Ante annos ferme triginta nihil tradebatur in schola Cantabrigiensi præter Alexandrum, parva logicalia (ut vocant) et vetera illa Aristotelis dictata, Scoticasque quæstiones."—Jortin's Life of Erasmus, p. 49, 50.

What books were at length used in common life instead of the Scriptures may be inferred from hence. "Englishmen" (we are told in No. 47. of the collection of records, Vol. II. Collier's Eccl. Hist.) "have in their hands the holy Bible and the New Testament in the Mother Tongue instead of the

the living fountains, and hewed out for themselves cisterns, which could hold no water. Had they consulted the Scriptures instead of the expositions of philosophers, and the 'perplexed reasonings of prejudiced men; it would have been impossible that the doctrines, which engaged the study of their lives, should have formed any part of their creed. But, the men of authority in the Church (as I have above remarked) were contending for worldly pre-eminence, and in a manner which was not to be defended upon Gospel-principles. It ought not, therefore, to be matter of wonder that they should rather "avail themselves of the learning of the times, than recall men of learning to the study of genuine Christianity: it ought not to be matter of wonder that they should not command philosophers to bring their discordant opinions to the test of infallible truth. It was, on the contrary, certainly part

"old fabulous and phantastical books of the Table Round, "Launcelot de Lake, Huou de Bourdeux, Besy of Hampton, "Guy of Warwick, and other such; whose impure filth and "vain fabulosity the light of God has abolished."

^t Peter Abelard and his followers in the 12th century explained nothing, but obscured the clearest truths by distinctions and subdivisions. Jortin's Rem. Vol. V. p. 262.

^u Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria, consecrated Synesius, a learned Platonic philosopher, Bishop of Ptolemais; tho' he declined the Bishoprick, declaring that he was a Platonist and could not receive some of the doctrines of Christianity. Jortin's Rem. Vol. IV. p. 243, 244.

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of the artifice of the Romish Church to ^v prohibit the use of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue and the ordinary exposition of them: a fatal artifice, in which, as well as in many others, it was equalled by the ^w Greek Communion, which taught that the Patriarch of Constantinople and his brethren were alone authorised to explain the declarations of Scripture.

Human learning suffered little less in the end from this confusion of sacred and profane knowledge, than the study of the Scriptures. Before the expiration of the fourth century it was decreed in a public ^x council that Bishops were not to read the books of Heathen writers. In the sixth century the teaching of philosophy at Athens was abolished by Justinian. And in process of time the purest Greek

^v See in "Stillingfleet's council of Trent examined and disproved" an account of the steps by which the use of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue was denied to the people. Having been partially restrained by particular Popes, it was publicly forbidden by the Lateran council under Innocent the third, and at length finally and solemnly prohibited by the council of Trent, p. 51—58. And though Pius the 4th afterwards permitted the use of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue; yet was this permission soon recalled by Pope Clement the 8th. See the preface to King James's Bible, p. 3.

^w Mosheim's Eccl. Hist. Vol. IV. p. 249.

^x The 16th canon of the 4th council of Carthage held in the year 398 orders that "Episcopus gentilium libros non legat:" on which Jortin remarks that "the Bishops soon began to relish this good advice, and not to trouble their heads with literature." Remarks, Vol. IV. p. 165.

and Latin Classics were erased to furnish materials for transcribing legendary tales, made up of the most incongruous mixture of sacred and profane speculations : till at length it was maintained that polite ^y literature ought to be stigmatized and banished, as the fountain of all heresy.

To these internal causes of ignorance and corruption, which, though not universal, were at least general in their operation, if we add the accumulated weight of all those ^z foreign invasions, general conquests, and general importations of savage laws and savage manners ; which rendered the times, of which I am speaking, the most unfortunate period of human existence ; we shall not be surpris'd at finding that the means of mental improvement were at length so extensively destroyed, as to leave several different monasteries or schools

^y Erasmus says, " Lovanii quidam non semel publicitus dixit apud populum linguas et politiores literas esse fontem omnium hæresiôn, et ob id earum professores fustibus ejiciendos ex academia ;" and adds what is well worthy of our notice, " et tamen inter illos nullus erat qui vel hisceret adversus Ecclesiæ decreta." Vol. IX. p. 531. Edit. Pet. Vander, Ludg. Bat. 1706.

^z Of the Goths, Vandals, and other barbarous conquerors Burnet says, " These new conquerors being rude, and ignorant, and wholly given to sensible things ; and learning being " universally extinguished ; gross superstitions took place."—Hist. of Ref. Vol. II. p. 63.

And Jortin says, that " an effect of the government of the barbarians in the West was that the Bishops and the Clergy became hunters and fighters." Remarks Vol. V. p. 98.

of learning, in possession of no more than ^a two or three books for their common use; and we shall easily be able to account for the worst evils of these times, and for the want of success, which attended all the well-meant ^b exertions that were made to disperse the impending cloud of ignorance and superstition.

These observations, joined to others on what may be considered as the effects of such a general state of the Christian world;—on the rise and establishment of the pretensions of the Romish Church, of which we formed a dependent part, and which conspicuously preserved and transmitted the regular profession, while it corrupted in many instances the purity, of Christianity;—on the Eastern Church, which was separated through these pretensions from western Christendom, and the influence of this separation on both communions;—and on as much besides of the internal and external state of the Church, as is contained within a short view both of the doctrines of

^a See the second dissertation prefixed by Warton to his history of English poetry. In it he says, that “one single copy of the Bible, St. Jerome’s Epistles, and some volumes of Ecclesiastical history and martyrology often served several different monasteries.”

The libraries of the religious houses in Syria are at present of nearly the same extent.

Völney’s Travels, Vol. II. p. 448. Engl. Edit.

^b By Alfred, Charlemagne, William the Conqueror, &c.

our Religion which it particularly defended or corrupted, and of the opposition which it encountered from foreign enemies ; may perhaps give us an imperfect sketch of the religious history of this period : they certainly will contribute to free pure Christianity from censure, and enable us to give an answer to every man, that asketh us a reason of the Hope that is in us ; as far as this Hope is connected with the part of religious history under our present consideration.

That enormous aggregate of power, which was possessed by the Bishops of Rome in the times immediately preceding the reformation, was the effect in a great degree of the causes above stated : but, it was not the production of a single age, nor indeed the entire production of the ages which succeeded the time of Constantine. It founded its presumptuous claims on the authority, which St. Peter was supposed to possess and to transmit to his successors. Whatever be the meaning of the words, which our Saviour addressed to St. Peter when this Apostle confessed that he was the Son of God ; as they proceeded from one who had declared that his Kingdom was not of this world, they could not mean to confer

^c Matt. xvi. 18.

temporal

temporal power on the Apostle : nor is it probable that they were designed to confer any spiritual superiority, much less any assurance of infallibility on him. Our blessed Saviour, as if to caution his Disciples beforehand against the evils, which would arise from disputes among the future rulers of his Church “ who should be greatest,” expressly^d forbid such disputes among them : declaring, that he who desired to be first should be last of all, and recommending to their imitation the unassuming simplicity of a little child. It is impossible, therefore, that he should set up one of his Disciples to be the spiritual head of all the others. He himself was to be the spiritual^e Master, to whom they were to look : and the Holy Ghost was to compensate for the want of his immediate and personal appearance by extraordinary gifts in the first ages, and by the inspired writings, which were an effect of those gifts and were to supply their place in future times. Consistently with this, St. Peter appears to have had no precedence in the council of the Apostles at Jerusalem. St. Paul also declares that^f “ in nothing was he behind

^d Mark ix. 34, &c.

^e Matt. xxiii. 8.

^f 2 Cor. xii. 11.

Again when St. Paul mentions (Gal. ii. 9.) James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, he makes no distinction in favour of Cephas (or Peter) nor does he mention him before the others.

the very chiefeſt Apoſtles :” and he withſtood St. Peter to the face for a reaſon, which deſtroys every idea of his infallibility : ^g “ becauſe he was to be blamed.” Beſides, St. Paul had the Goſpel of the ^h uncircumciſion committed to him in the ſame manner, as that of the circumciſion was to St. Peter : and both he and the other Apoſtles appear at all times to act independently of every other ſpiritual head, than Chriſt. But of whatever nature St. Peter’s authority and pre-eminence might be ; they ought in reality to confer nothing of either on the Biſhops of Rome. ⁱ “ It is “ doubtful whether St. Peter ever was at “ Rome, but that he fixed his chair there is “ a very idle and groundleſs imagination.” Eufebius, indeed, ſays that St. Peter came to Rome in the days of Claudius : but, he ^k ſeems

^g Gal. ii. 11. ^h Gal. ii. 7.

ⁱ Bp. Bull’s vindication of the Church of England, 8^{vo}. p. 139.

Archbiſhop Cranmer alſo ſays it was not certain that St. Peter ever was at Rome. Burnet’s Hiſt. of the Reformation, Vol. I. p. 175.

Stillingfleet in his Orig. Britan. ſpeaks nearly to the ſame effect, concluding at length with an approbation of Laſtantiuſ’s opinion that St. Peter certainly did not come to Rome till the reign of Nero, nor long before his martyrdom, p. 45—48.

^k Bp. Bull’s vindication of the Church of England, p. 139. See, concerning the credulity of Papias, Eufebius himſelf : Hiſt. Eccl. l. iii. c. 39. Eufebius, however, appears not to have been leſs haſty, in what he admits upon report concerning the converſion of the Emperour Philip, l. vi. c. 34.

to have received this from the authority of Papias, who was a credulous writer. However, in process of time, as the dignity no less than the opulence of cities attaches itself to the persons of those, who fill important stations in them; and as the Church of Rome was the ¹only Western Church, which aspired to the credit of Apostolical foundation; the Bishops of Rome began to be regarded with peculiar respect, and a ^m titular kind of pre-eminence was tacitly allowed them. St. Peter also, once presumed to have been the first Bishop of that See, was allowed in succeeding times to have been so without contradiction. And as appeals were made in civil matters from different parts of the Empire to the Imperial city; so they were also made in matters respecting Christianity. Probably too, these latter were made the more frequently in the

¹ See Waterland's *Lady Moyer's Sermons*, p. 326.

^m Mosheim's *Eccl. Hist.* Vol. I. p. 264. That this pre-eminence was only titular may be inferred from hence: it was declared by the general council at Nice that "the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch had the same authority over the countries round them, that he of Rome had over those that lay about that city." Burnet's *Hist. of the Reform.* Vol. I. p. 138. And this titular pre-eminence the Greeks were to the last disposed to admit, viz. "Papam ordine, non dignitate præcedere." *Cave's Hist. Lit.* Vol. II. *Sæc. Synod.* p. 234.

T. Smith also in his account of the Greek Church admits (p. 2) a priority of Dignity in the See of Rome; though he asserts (p. 80) the perfect equality of the Patriarch of Constantinople with the Pope.

early ages ; because, notwithstanding the corrupt state of the Romish Church in subsequent times, it is notorious that she was ^p singularly free from the early heresies. The supposed successors of St. Peter soon availed themselves of the power, which these proofs of respect appeared to acknowledge in them ; and proceeded to issue directions and menaces to distant parts of the Christian world. These interpositions were by no means received with approbation, or with silent acquiescence. As early as in the second century they excited the resentment and censure ^q both of Irenæus, and Polycrates. And in the third century ^r Cyprian

^p Sozomen, Hist. Eccl. l. iii. c. 6, and 13. and l. vi. c. 23. Reading's Edit.

Stillington's Orig. Britan. p. 226.

Waterland's Lady Moyer's Sermons, p. 327.

Horsley's Tracts, p. 39.

^q Ειρηναίος ο Λυγδυνεύς της εν Γαλλία επισκοπος τῆ Βικτορος δι' επιστολης γενναίως κατεδραμεν μεμπταμίως αὐτῆ την θερμοτητα, κ. τ. λ. Socrates, Hist. Eccl. l. v. c. 22. Reading's Edit.

Polycrates expressed a similar disapprobation of the conduct of the Bishop of Rome, and on the same occasion. Heylyn's Reform. justified, p. 270.

^r Cyprian says on the subject, " Statutum fit omnibus nobis " et æquum fit pariter ac justum, ut unius cujusque causa illic " audiat ubi est crimen admissum ; et singulis pastoribus portio gregis fit adscripta, quam regat unusquisque et gubernet, " rationem sui actus Domino redditurus : oportet utique eos " quibus præsumus non circumcursare nec episcoporum concordiam cohærentem sua subdola et fallaci temeritate collidere, " sed agere illic causam suam, ubi et accusatores habere et testes " sui criminis possent." Epist. 55. Edit. Paris. 1726. p. 86.

And again he says, " habet in ecclesiæ administratione voluntatis suæ arbitrium liberum unusquisque præpositus, ratio-
" nem

opposed with great resolution the incroachments of the Bishops of Rome; refusing as Bishop of Carthage to defend himself in answer to an appeal, which had been received at Rome against him; and declaring that all Bishops were equal in power. But remonstrances, and repeated decrees of early councils, were not sufficient to counteract a power, which was sure of being supported by the passions and interests of mankind. Even Athanasius, when obliged to leave Alexandria, retired to Rome and contributed to aggrandize the Bishop of that See by appealing to him. Indeed, it may be remarked of both the ⁿ Eastern and the ^w African Clergy, that, whenever they were unable to support either themselves or their doctrines, they were al-

“nem actus sui Domino redditurus.” Epist. 72. p. 129. ad finem.

Hence Jortin says of St. Cyprian, “if his authority be any thing, the Pope’s authority is nothing: he hath cut it up from the root by establishing the parity of bishops.” 2d Charge, Sermons, Vol. VII. p. 394.

^o Of the second general council and that at Milevis—See Burnet’s Hist. Vol. I. p. 138—9. Collier’s Eccl. Hist. Vol. I. p. 27 and 128. Cave’s Hist. Lit. Vol. I. p. 560. and Bingham’s Antiquities, b. ix. c. 1. sect. 13.

^t Sozomen says in his Eccl. Hist. “αφικομενον δε ως αυτης Αθανασιον φιλοφρονως επιξαντο και προς αυτης την κατ’ αυτον ειληκον δικην.” l. iii. c. 7. See also Socrates, Hist. Eccl. l. ii. c. 11.

^u Socrates, Hist. Eccl. l. iv. c. 12.

^w See a claim addressed in the 5th century to the African Clergy by a Bishop of Rome, in which he asserts his Right thus to receive appeals and to decide on all occasions. Cave’s Hist. Lit. Vol. I. p. 394.

ways

ways forward to appeal to the Roman Pontiff. Besides, after the civil establishment of Christianity the Bishops of Rome had not only the * Imperial sanction for their titular pre-eminence, and a full share of the legal † power, which the Church now derived from the state ; they had also the most favourable opportunity of increasing this power by the removal of the residence of the Emperours to the Eastern parts of their Dominions. The Papal encroachments found likewise from time to time protection in the disordered state of the Western world, arising from the inundation of Barbarians ; and precedent in the example of unlimited power, conferred by the Celtic Barbarians on their ‡ Arch-Druid. They had, moreover, not only ecclesiastical pretensions for their support : these, through the favours which they conferred by absolving the consciences of guilty Princes and by assisting them

* Mosheim, Vol. I. p. 351.

† One of the branches of this legal power, which contributed exceedingly in future ages to the temporal preeminence of the Clergy, was the right which Constantine gave persons, contending in law, to remove their cause out of the civil courts and to appeal to the judgement of the Bishops ; whose sentence in this case was to have the same authority as if it had been decreed by the Emperour himself. Sozomen, Hist. Eccl. l. i. c. 9. This concession of Constantine was afterwards farther ratified, as Cave says, by two laws, one of Arcadius, another of Honorius. Prim. Christ. Vol. I. p. 253. See also more on this subject in Bingham's Antiquities, b. ii. c. 7.

‡ Jortin's Rem. Vol. IV. p. 441.

with

with anathemas against their enemies, procured in the eighth century for the Bishoprick of Rome large ^a donations of land, and raised it to the substantial power of a temporal Sovereignty.

During the progress of these circumstances, we cannot wonder that the ^b Roman Pontiff should at an early period lay the foundation of a separation between the Latin and Greek Churches by the excommunication of the Bishop of Constantinople; and that he should afterwards assert his independence by ^c refusing at his election to pay the usual tribute to the Emperour: or that those Bishops, who had gone thus far in the establishment of their Dominion, and who had also dared publickly to ^d assert that St. Peter, whose image the Emperour threatened to destroy, was revered as a God upon earth, should, after fruitless admonitions to the Eastern Emperours on the subject of image-worship, not only ^e go on to

^a From Pepin.

^b Felix Bishop of Rome excommunicated Acacius Bishop of Constantinople about the end of the fifth century; and was himself in return excommunicated by Acacius.

Mosheim, Vol. II. p. 83. Jortin's Rem. Vol. IV. p. 308.

See also Jortin's 3d Charge, Sermons, Vol. VII. p. 415.

^c This was done by Agatho in the 7th Century.

^d This was asserted by Gregory the great; as Mr. Gibbon omits not to inform us. Hist. Vol. V. p. 107.

^e This happened in the eighth century under the Popedom of Gregory the second and third. Mosh. Vol. II. p. 262—3.

pronounce

pronounce a separation between their own and the Eastern Churches, but likewise to disclaim all dependence on the Emperour's civil authority. And much less can we wonder, as soon as their usurped Dominion appeared afterwards to be in danger of contraction from the interference of the Greek Patriarch in ^f parts of the Latin communion, that they should at length consummate this unhappy breach by new and unrecalled anathemas.

In the mean time also the watchful policy of the Romish Church failed not to grasp at all the different means, both internal and external, which offered themselves to secure the power, which she claimed, and to impose its decisions on the Christian world. As if the general influence over the Western Church, which the Bishops of it had imperceptibly given to the See of Rome, was not a sufficient support for the Papal Dominion; no sooner had the successors of those ^g pious Monks, who

^f In Illyricum, Macedonia, Epirus, Achaia, Thessaly, and Sicily: and about the year 862. *Mosh.* Vol. II. p. 352.

Cave calls it the controversia Bulgariana, and says of it—
 “Quantas turbas excitaverit controversia hæc Bulgariana historiarum hujus sæculi (scilicet noni) non profus ignaris satis constat. Hinc rupta deinceps penitus concordia, natumque schisma nullo forte sæculo extingendum.” *Hist. Liter.* Vol. II. p. 2.

^g See what is said concerning the Monks of Egypt by Eusebius. *Hist. Eccl.* l. ii. c. 17.

See also Bingham's *Antiquities*, b. viii. c. 1. sect. 4.

in times of persecution had fled from the habitations of society, or who in future times had withdrawn through erroneous notions of Christianity to a life of mortification, made themselves considerable by their numbers, their possessions, and the acquisition of all the learning of their times; than the Church of Rome immediately ^h detached them from the jurisdiction of their respective Prelates, and formed them into independent communities, which were every where to obey the orders and enforce the authority of the supreme Pontiff. But this was a less injurious device for the establishment of Papal power, than presents itself to us in the fatal ^l restraints, imposed with regard to the use of the Scriptures in the common language; and in the dispensations and indulgences; no less than the ^k excommunications, penances, holy wars, and ^l per-

^h This happened in the seventh century, as Mosheim says, Vol. II. p. 172. See concerning it, Collier's Eccl. Hist. Vol. I. p. 388. And concerning the original subjection of Monks to the Bishops of their own diocese, see Bingham's Antiquities, b. ii. c. 4. sect. 2. and b. vii. c. 3. sect. 17.

ⁱ See note ^v page 85.

^k It was a prevailing opinion that he who was excommunicated forfeited all the rights not only of a citizen, but also of a human creature. Jortin's 3d charge, Sermons, Vol. VII. p. 417.

^l Burnet says, "The first instance of severity on men's bodies, which was not censured by the Church, was in the fifth" (rather sixth) "century under Justin the first, who ordered the tongue of Severus (who had been Patriarch of Antioch, but did

secutions, which proceeding in the end to the most horrid extravagance diffused lasting impiety, immorality, and cruelty through the different orders of society. But, indeed, what less than all this was to be expected from the continued and almost uninterrupted advances, which the Papal power had for many ages been making; and from the profligacy of the Bishops, by whom it was finally established? The Prelates, who filled the Apostolical chair about the ninth and tenth centuries, have furnished the enemies of Christianity, no less than the enemies of the abuses of it, with inexhaustible matter of invective. They seem to have been permitted by Providence to prove the extreme folly, as well as blasphemy, of those pretensions to infallibility, which have been made for the Bishops of that See. “There was a^m succession (says Stillingfleet) of not

daily anathematise the Council of Chalcedon) to be cut out:” —And that it was not before the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that such cruelties were raised to their utmost extravagance by being inflicted on numbers of simple and innocent persons.

Hist. of the Ref. Vol. I. p. 24.

As late as in the sixteenth century the Pope wished to introduce the inquisition into every country of Christendom, Burnet’s Hist. Vol. II. p. 347.

^m Sermon 1st, Vol. II. 8vo. p. 49. Edit. 1697.

Jortin says of this period, “The Prelates and Clergy were in general as ignorant and profligate as can well be conceived: and the Popes were not men but Devils.” Rem. Vol. V. p. 13.

“ less

“ less than fifty Bishops so remarkable for their
 “ wickedness that Annas and Caiaphas (set-
 “ ting only aside their condemning Christ)
 “ were saints in comparison of them.” Among
 the Bishops of Rome, however, after the com-
 mencement of the eleventh century, there cer-
 tainly were many, who were distinguished by
 their zeal for the recovery of the discipline of
 the Church, and the honour of the holy See.
 But such was the ultimate tendency of their
 zeal, that we may almost join with those
ⁿ writers, who pronounce their virtues to have
 been more detrimental to mankind, than the
 vices of their predecessors. They appear to
 have taken it for granted, that whatever au-
 thority had been either exercised, or claimed,
 by their predecessors belonged of right to their
 Church. And effectual means had been left
 them to persuade superstitious and illiterate
 ages of the justice of their pretensions by the
^o forgeries, which had been contrived to sanc-
 tion all their temporal and spiritual claims, and

ⁿ Jortin: 3d Charge, Sermons, Vol. VII. p. 421. Mr. Gibbon, &c.

^o The forgeries of the donation of Constantine and the decretals of Isidorus.

Cardinal Cusanus himself says of the former, “ reperi in ipsa
 “ scriptura manifesta argumenta confictionis et falsitatis.”

Jewell's Works, p. 369.

which were actually received for many ages as genuine productions. And though Gregory the Seventh may be considered as having carried the Papal power to its height, and as having substantiated in the eleventh century the Papal^p right of interfering and deciding universally in both civil and religious concerns; yet Papal insolence seems to have extended itself under his successors in the^q following centuries, and was not carried to its extreme height till the Pope's boasted^r infallibility was

The latter were supposed to contain the decrees of sixty Bishops from Clement to Siricius. Blondel has most fully proved the forgery of them and it is confessed by Steph. Baluzius—Cave's Hist. Lit. Vol. II. p. 21. It is even confessed by Baronius. Annal. ad an. 865.

These forgeries, however, were not fully detected before the Reformation.

^p Mosheim gives some account of the Dictatus Hildebrandini, or what may be supposed to have been Gregory's principles of Papal Government, Vol. II. p. 491.

^q Particularly in the thirteenth century under Innocent the Third, &c.

^r Gelafius, who was Bishop of Rome in the fourth century, had the effrontery to claim infallibility for himself and his See. Jortin's Rem. Vol. IV. p. 315. But, this infallibility was first publicly and explicitly allowed by the council of Trent.

It may be thought strange that it should be done at a time when the Papacy was so rudely attacked by the reformers: but the Church of Rome acted about this time in the same imprudent manner with regard also to its other claims. In the year 1556 the Pope declared "he would change Kingdoms at his pleasure, that he had made Ireland a Kingdom, that all Princes were under his feet, and that he would allow no Prince to be his companion, nor to be too familiar with him." Burnet's Hist. Vol. II. p. 342—3. Thus likewise Cardinal Pole in his Book "De unione ecclesiastica" very

at length proposed and acknowledged in a public council. It would be easy to add more observations on the conduct of particular Bishops of Rome, by which the Papal power was established: but the truth with regard to those Bishops is, that all of them labored to extend their jurisdiction and uniformly carried on the same scheme. One encroachment followed another; till at length, aided by the circumstances above mentioned and various others, they were enabled to oppress all Western Christendom, and to crush for many ages every attempt to revive a spirit of moderation in the rulers of the Church, and the true knowledge and practice of Christianity among its different members. The corruption and ignorance, which ensued, were in the end such; that, as we are^f told, “the world was
“ possessed with a conceit that there was a
“ trick for saving souls besides that plain me-

very much depresses the royal, and exalts the Papal authority, Indeed, Bp. Jewell states that the proportion, asserted about this time to subsist between the Emperour's and the Pope's power, was as one to seventy seven. Jewell's Apology for the Church of England, p. 73, and elsewhere.

And, to complete the whole, Cardinal Bellarmine asserts that the only reason why the early Christians did not depose Nero, Dioclesian, and Julian was because they wanted means to effect it. This is mentioned and well refuted by Cave in his “Primitive Christianity.” Vol. II. p. 349—351.

^f See Jortin's Rem. Vol. V. p. 349.

^g Burnet's Hist. Vol. II. p. 74.

“ thod, which Christ had taught ; and that
 “ the Priests had the secret of it in their
 “ hands.”

Whatever friendly agreement there might be between the Bishops of Rome and other Bishops in the commencement of their power ; no agreement could at length be maintained with the Romish Church, except by submission. And various reasons contributed to hinder this in the Clergy of the East. The want of just foundation in the Papal power could not be unknown to the Patriarchs of Constantinople : and these Patriarchs were not the less strenuous to “ retort the anathemas, by which they were separated from the Romish communion, and to defend their own power, because (as is “ remarked of them) they were singularly tolerant in the exercise of it. The vicinity of the Imperial court also, which hindered the Bishops of Constantinople from acquiring civil power, contributed in no small degree to protect them against the arbitrary encroachments of other Churches. Besides, the * splendour itself of this court created in all, who lived within its influence and protection

“ This was done by Acacius, Photius, and Michael Cerularius. Mosheim, Vol. II. p. 84, 351, 555.

“ Socrates, Hist. Eccl. l. vii. c. 11.

* The account which may be collected from Crystostom’s works of this splendour almost exceeds belief.

such

such a pride, as was little inferior to that of the Romish Church, and would submit to the dictates of no foreign Ecclesiastic. There was, moreover, a fixed contempt, with which the Greeks affected to treat their less learned brethren of the West, which irresistibly prevented their submission in matters of religious controversy. The Greek Clergy, though involved in nearly a common ^r ignorance of true Christianity, with the whole Christian world, were certainly more learned in other respects, and more grave than those of the Latin communion. Some few, indeed, of the dignified Clergy among the Latins were in no respect inferior to the most celebrated of the Greeks, but these surpassed the other members of the Western Church ^a beyond all comparison. The prejudices, arising in the minds of the Greeks from all these circumstances, made them amidst their distress repeatedly resist the solicitations of ^a those among their Emperours,

^r The Greeks and Latins seem to have agreed in the darker ages that the essence and life of Religion consisted in image-worship, in honoring dead saints, in collecting reliques, in enriching the Church, and other such exertions of piety.

Mosheim, Vol. II. p. 417.

And Jortin calls the Bishops at the second council of Nice, who reestablished image-worship in the East in the 8th century, "the most lying and senseless blockheads upon the face of the earth." Remarks, Vol. IV. p. 466

^a This was remarkably true in England in the 13th and 14th centuries. See the second dissertation prefixed to Warton's History of English poetry.

^a This happened both to Michael and John Palæologus.

who wished to purchase the assistance of the Franks by the dependence of their Church: and joined to other prejudices, excited by the oppressive ^b Reign of the Latins in Constantinople and by mutual persecution, made them to the very last; even in the extremity of their siege, disdain to hear of succour, which was to be obtained by submission to the Roman Pontiff.

The influence, which this situation of the two Communions must have had on their doctrines, is very obvious. I have before remarked that one pernicious consequence of disputes between the Rulers of the Church was the want of purity, which thenceforth prevailed throughout the Christian world. The pretensions of the Latin and Greek Churches, and the particular ^c doctrines, in which they opposed each

^b For the sixty years, during which the Crusaders kept possession of Constantinople.

^c The fatal consequences of this state of the Christian Church shewed themselves soon after the days of Constantine. The doctrines of Arianism, which prevailed at Constantinople under Constantine and some of his successors, were so powerfully impressed on Ulphilas, when he came thither on an embassy from the Goths, and were so successfully propagated by him among his countrymen; that the Arian heresy maintained itself much longer among them, and, through their means, among other Northern nations, than in any other communities. Theodoret, in his Eccl. Hist. says of Ulphilas's conversion to Arianism, “Κατ’ ἐκεῖνον δὲ τοῦ χρόνου Οὐλφίλας αὐτῶν (Γοτθῶν scilicet) ἐπίσκοπος ἦν, ὃν μάλᾳ ἐπείδοντο, καὶ τῆς ἐκεῖν’ λόγῳ ἀκινήτης ὑπελαμβάνοντο νομῆς τούτου καὶ λόγοις κατακλήσας Εὐδοξίῳ καὶ χρημασί διλεάσας πείσαι παρῆσκευασε τῆς Βαρβαρῆς τῆν βασιλεῖν κοινῶνιν ἀσπασασ-
“θαι· ἐπίσε δὲ, φησας ἐκ φιλοτιμίας γεγενηθῆναι τῆν ἐριν, δόγματων δὲ μὴδεμῶν εἶναι διαφορᾶν.” L. iv. c. 37. Reading. See also Sozomen. Hist. Eccl. l. vi. c. 37.

other, whether important or not, were the subjects more earnestly inculcated among themselves and enforced on their converts and dependants, than the great and fundamental doctrines of Christianity. When, therefore, the northern^d nations of Europe were converted by these Churches; they may be said not so much to have been converted to Christianity in general, as to the peculiar and distinguishing tenets of the Romish or Greek Communion: and that too, at the most degenerate period of both those Communions. No wonder, therefore, that the sword was the instrument, by which

Sozomen afterwards clearly asserts that Ulphilas was the great cause of the prevalence and continuance of Arianism among the nations of the North. Hist. Eccl. l. vii. c. 17. Where speaking of the divisions of the Arians he calls one of them that of the Goths, adding “ Γοτθων δε, κεδοτι και Σελινιας, ο τριτων επισκοπος, ομοιωσ εδοξαζεν’ επακολουθησαντες δε τριτω οχιδου παντες βαρβαροι συν αυτοις εκκλησιαζον’ πειθηνοιοι γαρ εις τα μαλιζα τω Σελινω ετυγχανον υποβραφει τε γενομενω και Σιδωχω Ουλφιλα, τη παρ’ αυτοις επισκοπησαντες, κ. τ. λ.

^d Bulgaria, Hungary, Bohemia, Saxony, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Poland, and Russia.

Mosheim charges Boniface the Apostle of the Germans with an excessive zeal for increasing the Honors and pretensions of the sacerdotal order and a profound ignorance of many things, of which the knowledge was absolutely necessary in an Apostle; and particularly of the true nature and genius of the Christian Religion, Vol. II. p. 207.

See also in Cave's Hist. Lit. a Letter from Joannes Smerz Polovecius, giving an account of the corruptions of the Latin and Greek Churches; and addressed to the King of the Russians, when he and his Kingdom were converted to the Greek Church. Vol. II. p. 113.

Christianity

Christianity was propagated among many of these nations; and that this should finish in Lithuania the conversion of northern Europe in the fourteenth century. However, though the contests between the Western and Eastern Christians were productive of many evils; they produced also some considerable good. They hindered all parties from corrupting the Scriptures through fear of detection. They kept alive some literary enquiries; and the spirit, with which they were carried on, powerfully urged the different disputants to exert at times their utmost abilities. Besides, the unsuccessful attempts, which were made to suppress these contentions and to effect an union of opinion among Christians, that there might be an union of operation also among them against their common enemies, were productive of excellent consequences. The embassies sent by the Greek Emperours into the West, and their journies thither at three different times, tended effectually to recall the attention of the Latins to ^f Greek literature; and, by disperf-

^e This may be conceded to Mr. Gibbon, without giving him the least advantage over real Christianity. See his History, Vol. V. p. 577.

^f The Greek language had been exiled from Italy upwards of 700 years, when Emanuel Crysoloras (who had been sent by John Palæologus Emperour of Constantinople to implore the assistance of the western Christians) set about the restoration of it in that country. See Port. Royal Greek Grammar, Pref. p. 9 and 12.

ing among them the means of attaining it, prepared the way for that Reformation, which was to succeed and remedy the evils of this unhappy period.

The doctrines, which declare the internal state of the Church, and which were particularly defended or corrupted during the ages, which fill up the long period from Constantine to the Reformation, consist either of those fundamental doctrines of our Religion, which respect the Trinity, the person and natures of our Saviour, and other such important articles of faith, which are received and professed by ourselves at present; or of those corruptions of Christianity, which became in subsequent times the subject of our Reformation. The former shew the effects of the degeneracy of the Christian world by the manner, in which they were defended: the latter by their very nature and Existence. The former had the advantage of being finally established in the earlier and less darkened part of this period. And certainly we have reason to bless God that they were then established; whatever the enemies of our Faith may^s insinuate to the contrary, and whatever cause we may have to disapprove of the manner in which it was done. The great doctrines of our Religion were de-

^s See Mr. Gibbon's Hist. Vol. IV. chap. 47.

livered in the inspired writings with a precision, which was abundantly sufficient for the instruction of those, who were disposed rather to obey the Word of God, than to look out for disputable matter in it. When subtlety and visionary speculation were afterwards introduced, the foundation was laid for heresies, which embittered the minds of Christians towards each other during the times of persecution, and which, being afterwards increased, made them endeavour to restrain such dissentions by public decisions of the Church, as soon as the civil magistrate was ready to lend his assistance on the occasion and to convene ecclesiastical assemblies. We know what were the confirmed decisions of such assemblies before the end of the seventh century: we know also on what authority of Scripture these decisions ought to have been made. As to the concomitant circumstances with which they were actually made, if these favour much of the corruption of the times, it is no more than we might expect. If the decisions of different councils on the heresy of Arius, no less than on other subjects relative to the doctrines, above mentioned, of the Trinity and of our blessed Saviour's Person and natures, were made in a tumultuous manner by men of ambitious views and of little perfect knowlege of Christianity;
and

and were also enforced by the ^h sword; it is no more than we might expect from the general transactions of those times, and is a proof, in addition to numberless others supplied by history, that the Almighty is often pleased to bring good out of evil. All, that is essential to our purpose, is to know that the doctrines in question, which are professed by us at present and which after these decisions were universally received before the end of the eighth century, are ⁱ warranted by Scripture. While we have means to convince us of this, we have reason to bless that God, who did not suffer his Church to fall into errors with regard to the great doctrines of our Religion, which it might afterwards have been unspeakably more difficult to do away, than those palpable corruptions which were the subject of our Reformation: and, especially too, might this have been the case amidst the effervescence of new opinions soon after the commencement of the Reformation; when Socinus and his followers were found to surpass every former sect of heretics in presumptuous and degrading as-

^h The Arian persuasion prevailed longest among the Goths in Italy and the Vandals in Africa, and is said to have been suppressed among them both by the sword of Belisarius.

ⁱ See an attempt to prove this at large in two Sermons preached before the University of Oxford by the author—in 1791.

fections concerning the person of Christ, and the nature of our redemption.

As to the corruptions, which were the subject of our Reformation, many of these began soon after the civil establishment of our Religion: but they went on increasing afterwards in a rapid proportion; uniting themselves as they advanced to new and similar corruptions, and forming at length that mass of impiety, which disgraced the Christian profession and totally eradicated all devotional Religion, till it was distinguished from true Christianity and separated from it. Among these the worship of saints and images and the whole consequent train of idolatry may be said to have ^k commenced with that subordinate worship of martyrs, which ^l Eusebius and other well-meaning rulers of the Church approved and promoted in the days of Constantine. The absurd ve-

^k Cave says, “ nullum pro imaginibus citari testem quarto sæculo anteriorem.” Hist. Lit. Vol. I. p. 650.

In the fourth century, however, such kind of idolatrous worship appears to have introduced itself: since Epiphanius in his epistle to the Bishop of Jerusalem says that coming into a Church, “ inveni ibi velum pendens in foribus ejusdem ecclesiæ tinctum atque depictum, et habens imaginem quasi Christi vel sancti cujusdam. Non enim satis memini cujus imago fuerit. Cum ergo hoc vidissem in ecclesia Christi contra auctoritatem scripturarum hominis pendere imaginem, scidi illud,” &c. Jerome’s Works, Tom. ii. p. 161. Basil 1565.

^l Jortin’s Rem. Vol. III. p. 11 and 289. Cave’s Hist. Lit. Vol. I. p. 650.

neration of the cross began with ^m Helena, mother of Constantine: and that of relicts with his successor Constantius, who first distinguished himself by the removal of them. Even ⁿ Jerome and Ambrose gave their unqualified sanction to injudicious ^o mortifications and to the long train of articles of will-worship, which ensued, by declaiming against marriage and by recommending monastic vows under the most ^p injurious circumstances. The fatal consequences, which proceeded, in the progress of more than a thousand years, from these and other such unhappy commencements, may all be said to have ultimately arisen from two principles, totally repugnant to the doctrines of Revelation: the one, that lyes are

^m S. Severus, p. 370—374.

Rufinus, Hist. Eccl. l. i. c. 7. Ed. Grynæi 1587.

Socrates, Hist. Eccl. l. i. c. 17. Reading.

ⁿ Jortin's Rem. Vol. II. p. 289.

^o It may be observed in general that, when external persecutions ceased, Christians began to vie with each other in inflicting voluntary punishments on themselves.

^p "Jerome drew a noble matron the mother of many children away from Rome with him, and was the means of sending her about to visit the different Monks of the East, and to squander the fortune of her family upon them."—"Ambrose was so violent a declaimer in favour of virginity, that he exhorts young girls in one of his treatises to enter into Nunneries even against the advice of their parents." Jortin's Rem. Vol. III. p. 37 and 40.

Jortin makes Erasmus say in a similar manner of the Monks themselves, "these men say that you must follow Jesus Christ, though you were to trample upon the bodies of your father and mother." Life of Erasmus, Vol. I. p. 71.

admissible

admissible in defence of truth ; the other, that mental imperfection is to be remedied by bodily suffering. Principles, which many of the ^a Fathers of the Church contributed to establish. Hence all the fictitious miracles, which gave sanction to the worship of ^b Saints, their images, and relicts : which gave this worship a general and firm footing before the end of the ^c sixth century, made it triumph over all the opposition of the Eastern Emperours in the eighth century, and made it triumph ultimately over the moderation with which the principal ^d Kingdoms of Western Europe for some ages received it. Hence also the diversified display of monastic institutions, the celibacy enforced on the Clergy, the doctrines of purgatory and of prayers for the dead, the fantastic penances, the crusades, persecutions, dispensations, and indulgences ; to say nothing of the ceremonies, which disgraced Christianity during these times. As to the corruptions relative to the Sacrament, these had a late origin. Communion without a

^a Ambrose, Hilary, Augustine, Gregory Nazianzen, and Jerome. See Jortin's Rem. Vol. IV. p. 19, 20.

^b See Jortin's 3d Charge, Sermons, Vol. VII. p. 410—415.

^c And particularly of the Virgin Mary.

^d Gibbon's Hist. Vol. V. p. 91.

^e France, England, Spain, and Germany. Gibbon, Vol. V. p. 131.

See Collier's Eccl. Hist. Vol. I. p. 139—142.

participation

the participation of the cup, the transubstantiation, and all the circumstances relative to the adoration of the Host, (of which many were the effects of trivial and accidental suggestions from the ignorant populace) can pretend to no early establishment. The refusal of the Scrip-

^w Pope Paschal in the 12th century ordered the Sacrament to be administered under one kind only. But the Laity in England had it in both kinds for 200 years after the Conquest. Collier's Eccl. Hist. Pref. p. 11. and Vol. I. p. 489.

^x Though transubstantiation was broached by Radbertus in the year 818; (Jortin's, Rem. Vol. IV. p. 484.) yet it was not established before the time of Innocent the third who lived in the 13th century. Mosheim, Vol. III. p. 243. and Cave's Hist. Lit. Vol. II. p. 276.

^y "The hanging up and adoring of the Host was but lately set up, says Cranmer, by Pope Innocent and Honorius."

Burnet's Hist. Vol. II. p. 116.

^z This was the case with both the Procession and the Festival of the holy Sacrament. Jortin's Rem. Vol. V. p. 472. And Mosheim, Vol. III. p. 261.

^a See an account of this in a preceding note, ^v p. 85. I may add that the Romanists not only attempted to bring the Scriptures into disuse, but also into discredit. Wickliff's followers urged against the preaching Friars that they laid blasphemous imputations on the Scriptures, and charged them with heresy. Collier's Eccl. Hist. Vol. I. p. 579.

Mosheim says, "the Popes permitted their champions to indulge themselves openly in reflections, injurious to the dignity of the Scriptures, and by an excess of blasphemy almost incredible to declare publicly that the edicts of the Pontiffs and the records of oral tradition were superior in point of authority to the express language of Scripture." Vol IV. p. 213. To the same effect Bp. Jewell says, "Indulgentiæ (inquit Plerias) auctoritate Scripturæ non innotuerunt nobis, sed auctoritate Romanæ Ecclesiæ Romanorumque Pontificum, quæ major est. Pighius etiam non dubitet dicere injussu Romanæ Ecclesiæ ne clarissimæ quidem scripturæ credendum." Apol. pro. Eccl. Anglic. p. 121 And such at length was the consequence of the early corruptions introduced into Christianity

tures to the people, in the common language, which, with some of the corruptions just stated, has been mentioned as a political consequence of the usurpations of the rulers of the Church, was accompanied at length with a similar refusal of all the different parts of religious ^b worship and ^c instruction. Such prohibitions, however, must be considered not only as a consequence, but also in subsequent ages as an additional and aggravating cause, of the perversion of our Religion. But, in whatever manner they are considered, they serve conspicuously to withdraw pure Christianity from the disgraceful scenes of this unhappy period, and leave the profligacy of the

by philosophy and of the attempts afterwards made to conceal and vilify the Scriptures; that, after the Lutheran controversy had been long carried on, many of the Monks in Scotland were so ignorant of their contents, as to charge Luther with being the author of that wicked book, called the New Testament. Jortin's Life of Erasmus, Vol. I. p. 126. See also on this subject Cave's Hist. Lit. Vol. II. Append. p. 158.

^b The Latin form of worship, which had for many ages before been strongly recommended by the Popes, was at length enforced in all the Western Churches by Gregory the seventh. Mosh. Vol. II. p. 573.

^c Our Homily against Rebellion (part the 6th) says, "very few of the most simple people were taught the Lord's prayer, the articles of faith, or the ten commandments, otherwise than in Latin." But Burnet goes much farther, and says of the beginning of the reign of Hen. VIIIth. "If any taught their children the Lord's prayer, the ten commandments and the Apostles' Creed in the vulgar tongue; that was crime enough to bring them to the stake." Hist. Ref. Vol. I. p. 31.

professors

professors of our Religion to be imputed most exclusively to themselves.

All these erroneous doctrines and usages appear to have been maintained, with very few^d exceptions, by both the Romanists and Greeks. The insignificancy of the^e charges, which Michael Cerularius urged against the Latins in the eleventh century, while it proves the sinister zeal of the disputant who urged them, proves also that the great corruptions of Christianity at that period were common to the whole Christian world. Even when the difference between the Western and Eastern Churches was afterwards reduced to^f four

^d Among these one of the principal exceptions is, that the Greeks did not refuse the cup to the Laity.

^e That they used unleavened bread at the Lord's Supper:— that they did not abstain from things strangled and from blood: that the Monks ate lard, and permitted their infirm brethren to eat flesh: that the Bishops adorned their fingers with rings, as if they had been bridegrooms: that the Priests were beardless: and that in baptism they used only one immersion. Mosh. Vol. II. p. 556—7.

^f The four articles respected the procession of the Holy Ghost, the use of leavened or unleavened bread in the sacrifice, the doctrine of purgatory, and the authority of the Pope. The disputants for the two Churches appear not to have differed essentially in their tenets concerning purgatory; though they could come to no decisive conclusion concerning it. See Du Pin's Hist. of the controversies of the 15th century, p. 37. Eng. Ed. But though formerly the great corruptions of the Romish Church were in general chargeable on the Greeks, and the difference between the Creeds of the two Communions was not important; yet the Confession of Faith, which was published by the Greeks in the last century, proves that they differ con-

articles, that only, which related to the Profession of the Holy Ghost, was a doctrine of Faith, on which they appear to have really and essentially differed.

With regard to the external state of the Church during this period, it has been ^s remarked that Christianity was so much altered and defaced after its civil establishment, as to stand in need of the protection of the civil power; and had it not enjoyed this protection, Paganism itself (if refined and new-modelled) might have had too many advantages over it. The remark is entirely just. And this unhappy alteration in our Religion might well render the evils, to which it was exposed from foreign enemies, a subject of terror to all those among its professors, whose apprehensions were not relieved by a consideration of its divine origin, and of the assurances which have been given us of its stability and perpetual duration. The invasions of the Goths, and of various other nations from the North, who, pursuing the same rout after the Goths, overwhelmed in successive ages all the civilized kingdoms of Southern Europe, were so destructive during

siderably at present from the Romanists in many respects. It appears, however, that their tenets in these respects are unfortunately different also from those of other Christian societies. Mosh. Vol. IV. p. 250.

^s Jortin's Rem. Vol. II. p. 337.

those

those times, and have since produced such lasting effects; that they form the principal part of our history during the four centuries which immediately followed the Reign of Constantine. But, the danger, which they seemed to threaten to the established profession of Christianity, was of very short continuance. The Northern invaders conquered, indeed, at different times all the different parts of the Roman Empire, except that which immediately ^h surrounded Constantinople; and often obtained forcible possession of Rome. But, in justice to their moderation it has been insisted that they did very little injury to the monuments of art or to the ^l religious edifices, which adorned the old Capitol of the world. And the danger, which their invasions might at first threaten to the profession of our Religion, was fully done away by the readiness and permanency, with which they themselves became its converts.

The greatest evils, which Christianity had to expect from foreign enemies, were to be feared from those, who every where declared themselves not less hostile to its discriminating doctrines, than to the persons of its professors.

^h Socrates, Hist. Eccl. l. v. c. 1. et l. vi. c. 6.

Sozomen, Hist. Eccl. l. vi. c. 39.

^l Sozomen says that Alaric, when he took Rome, had such reverence for St. Peter that he permitted his Church to be an Asylum. Hist. Eccl. l. ix. c. 9.

About the beginning of the seventh century those ^k Churches of Asia, which had been the distinguished care of the Apostles and peculiar objects of divine Revelation, were sunk into a gross degeneracy both of Faith and practice. About the same time also the ^l Persians, Romans, and northern Barbarians seem to have reached their period of greatest profligacy and disorder. At this seasonable juncture Mahomet, the artful and warlike impostor of Arabia, arose to delude and persecute mankind. Aware of his own fraud, and of the necessity of conciliating the minds of men, he accommodated his doctrines to the ^m prepossessions of all around him in a manner totally different from whatever has been observed in the Revelations of the God of truth. He not only endeavoured, by the assistance of the Jewish and Christian ⁿ Scriptures to form a Religion, which might be

^k Evagrius describes the Churches of the East, as being in a miserable state of confusion even in the fifth century. Hist. Eccl. l. iii. c. 30. Reading.

^l Gibbon, Vol. V. p. 281.

^m Jortin has remarked, that without this he never could have made five converts. Rem. Vol. II. p. 278.

ⁿ Jortin says that "Mahometism is a borrowed System, made up for the most part of Judaism and Christianity; and if it be considered in the most favourable view, might possibly be accounted a sort of Christian heresy. If the Gospel had never been preached, it may be questioned whether Mahometism would have existed. Its author was an ignorant knave and fanatic, who had neither skill nor genius to form a religion out of his own head." First Charge, Sermons, Vol. VII. p. 369.

received by both Jews and Christians as consistent in some degree with their own, and which might flatter the prejudices of his countrymen who boasted of their descent from Abraham; but farther also he dared to plead Divine authority for indulging the impurity of his followers in this life, and for promising them a continuance of their impure gratifications in the regions of eternal happiness. The circumstances of the times, or the just indignation of the Almighty gave success to the impostor; while at the same time such marks of imposition were left on himself and his Religion, as might for ever make known the real characters of ° both. Though

° It is not from Prideaux and other writers of former times only, that we are to seek for severe condemnations of both Mahomet and the Koran. Volney, who is among the latest and most intelligent travellers into the East, says, “It certainly may be asserted safely that of all the men, who have ever dared to give laws to nations, Mahomet was the most ignorant; of all the absurd compositions ever produced, none is more truly wretched than his book.”

Vol. II. p. 397. Engl. Edit.

And Mr. Whitaker asserts in his “origin of Arianism disclosed” that Mahomet “betrayed his ignorance in a form so very palpable and gross upon his very Koran, as seems to be intended for the mint-mark of God himself in order to show the falsity of his inspiration to every eye,” p. 336. In support of his assertion he then gives many particular instances of this ignorance and exposes the weakness of the attempts, made by Sale and the Mahometans, to palliate its absurdities, p. 336—360. Afterwards in the same chapter, he stigmatizes the gross obscenity both of the Mahometan Prophet and Religion, and of Mr. Gibbon who is their advocate; exposes the perjury sanctioned by the example of Mahomet; and satisfactorily shews that,

^p three out of his four immediate successors fell by the hands of assassins ; yet such success attended the zeal with which the professors of his Religion fought, that all the provinces both of Asia and Africa, which bordered on Arabia, soon became subject to them. And so widely did their conquests extend ; that they subdued also a considerable part of Europe, and made such advances towards the conquest of the remaining parts, that the entire conquest of them is said to have been hindered by a defeat, which Mr. Gibbon ascribes so exclusively to the valour of an ^q individual, as to declare that the Clergy are indebted for their existence to his sword. That such, indeed, was the state of our Religion both with regard to its professors and its doctrines, that neither the Eastern nor Western Christians opposed to the in-

that, though he was assisted in the composition of his Koran by an excommunicated Christian, his principal assistance came from the Jew, Abdia Ben Salon ; so that Mr. Whitaker, p. 396. calls Mahometanism “ a kind of Jewish heresy,” which we have just before seen called “ a sort of Christian heresy” by Dr Jortin.

As a consequence of the sanction, justly said by Mr. Whitaker to be given by Mahomet to perjury, I shall produce the following fact on the authority of Mr. Gibbon. “ Four thousand citizens of Herat of a grave character and mature age unanimously swore that an idolatrous fane,” which they had just burnt, “ never existed.” By this meritorious oath (as it was thought) they and their city escaped all punishment for the outrage. Gibbon’s Hist. Vol. V. p. 384.

^p Omar, Othman, and Ali. Abubeker the first of his successors reigned only two years.

^q Charles Martel. See Mr. Gibbon, Vol. V. p. 412.

roads

roads of Mahometan enthusiasm the infinite advantages, which the superior purity of their Religion ought to have afforded them, may readily be confessed. But, notwithstanding the unworthiness of Christians, we cannot so readily confess that the Almighty ought to be excluded from some particular share in the ^r defeat here referred to. We need go no farther than to this historian's own words to prove the contrary. After the seventh day's contest, which (as the Saracens had still the undisturbed possession of their camp) appears by no means to have been irrecoverably decisive, he says—"In the disorder and despair
 " of the night the various tribes of Yemen
 " and Damascus, of Africa and Spain, were
 " provoked to turn their arms against each
 " other : the remains of their Host were sud-
 " denly dissolved, and each Emir consulted
 " his safety by an hasty and separate retreat." Surely, this resembles ^r defeats, which Christians want no human authority to refer solely to God.

But, this is not the only occurrence of the sort with regard to such enemies of our Faith, which is worthy of our notice, and which is

^r Gibbon's Hist. Vol. V. p. 411.

^s See the 8th Chapter of Judges, and the 7th Chapter of the second book of Kings.

recorded by the same historian. The manner, in which Rome was ^t preserved from a formidable attack of the Saracens by the dispersion and total destruction of their fleet; the preservation of Constantinople from alarming and repeated attacks of the same enemies in their early history by the apparently accidental discovery of a most destructive ^u fire; the preservation of it also from the meditated attack of ^v Zengis Khan; the ^y disorder, by which Bajazet's fury against the Christians was suspended; his ^z defeat and destruction by Timour; and the fortunate escape of Constantinople from the victorious ^a Timour himself; all these remarkable circumstances are admitted by our historian and well known. It is presumptuous and often fallacious to reason from events in human history to the establishment

^t Gibbon, Vol. IV. p. 441.

^u Gibbon, Vol. V. p. 399—405. This fire was discovered by Callinicus an Egyptian in the 7th century, and called by the Greeks "*υγρον πυρ*." Bp. Warburton's Julian, p. 234. See also Jortin's Rem. Vol. IV. p. 430.

^x Gibbon, Vol. VI. p. 308.

^y Ibid. p. 323. Mr. Gibbon's words in this passage are well worthy of our notice: "His progress, says Mr. G. was checked, not by the miraculous interposition of the Apostle (St. Peter), not by a crusade of the Christian powers, but by a long and painful fit of the gout." Doubtless, the historian might have spared his reflections on the occasion; as Bajazet's disorder, at this critical juncture, might, notwithstanding all that he insinuates to the contrary, have still been eminently providential.

^z Gibbon, Vol. VI. p. 330.

^a Ibid. Vol. VI. p. 357.

of particular and immediate interpositions of Providence. But, the most moderate estimate of these circumstances, as connected with our Religion, ought at least to exclude all boastings of infidelity, and all sarcastic reflections concerning the means by which we now have an opportunity in this ^b our seat of learning to demonstrate the truth of the Christian, rather than that of the Mahometan Religion.

Through these ^c deliverances Western Europe and Constantinople were rescued from the power of the Mahometans and of all the

^b Gibbon, Vol. V. p. 409.

^c Such observations, however, must be considered as opposed to the sneers of our adversaries, rather than as employed in the elucidation of events on which the existence of our religion can be thought to have ever depended. For it is false in fact that a Religion, so founded as Christianity, must be extirpated, or essentially endangered, if it should cease to be established by civil authority. Christianity has no necessary dependence upon earthly power. We know that it flourished under the persecution of the Roman Emperours, and in the end converted its persecutors. We know that it afterwards converted the savage conquerors from the North. And we know from authority, which we cannot doubt, that it must at length convert its Mahometan oppressors. In the mean time also we are assured that all the cruelty and all the perfidy of the Mahometans have not been able to extirpate it in any of their dominions either of Europe or Asia. Indeed, the authority of Mr. Gibbon himself may be brought to prove, that the Northern coast of Africa is the only land where the light of the Gospel has been totally extinguished after a long and perfect establishment. (Vol. V. p. 386). And even this extinction of it, if referred to its proper cause, must be referred to the devastations of the plague, of famine, and the sword; which laid waste this country not long before its conquest by the Saracens, (Gibbon's Hist. Vol. IV. p. 276. 331. &c.) and not to the Religion, or to the power of unbelievers.

external

external enemies of Christianity, till the Christians of Western Europe had established their powerful Kingdoms ; Kingdoms, which conspicuously partake of the iron ascribed to them in Daniel's ^d prophecies : till learning had begun to flourish in these Kingdoms by an ^e importation from Constantinople of all the means of cultivating it ; and its perpetuity also had been insured by the art of printing : till a Reformation of Christianity was about to commence : and till, from the united influence of all these causes, such barriers were formed for the support of our Religion, as have since raised it far above all apprehension from external enemies.

Such are the outlines of the Christian history from the time of Constantine to the Reformation ; as far in general as relates to the degeneracy of the rulers of the Church, to the confusion of sacred and profane learning, to the invasions of savage conquerors ; and to the effects produced, under these leading principles, on the Romish and Greek Communions, on the doctrines of the Church, and on its

^d Dan. ii. 41, 42. See Lowth's Commentary.

^e Not only were great numbers of very valuable books imported into Western Europe by different Greek Emperours on their journeys thither ; but, farther, Constantinople had been taken, possessed sixty years, and exhausted of many of its literary treasures by the Western Christians before it was taken by the Turks.

situation

situation with regard to external enemies. And so little reason is there for the sarcasms, which are levelled against our Religion in consequence of any corruptions of this period ; since it appears that these corruptions all proceeded, in reality, from the depravity of our nature, and the want of a proper application of Christianity to counteract and subdue it.

Indeed, the corruption of the antediluvian world under the Revelation originally given to mankind, of the Heathen world under the precepts of Noah and the light of nature, of the Jews under the Mosaic covenant, and lastly of the Christians under the secure and established profession of the Gospel, all tend to prove the same great truths : they tend to prove incontrovertibly both the inveterate depravity of our nature, and that the God of all the nations of the earth has universally ordained that the blessings, deducible from the religious information which he affords them, shall depend in an eminent degree upon their own voluntary and regular use of it.

S E R M O N I V.

1 P E T. III. 15.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man, that asketh you a reason of the Hope that is in you.

HAVING given a sketch of the history of our Religion from its complete publication after the resurrection of Christ to the commencement of the Reformation, I shall now proceed to state a few general observations concerning the Reformation, and then confine myself (according to the plan which I have laid down) to the particular history of our own Church.

The corruptions, charged on the professors of our Religion in the darker ages, must not be supposed to have passed, even in the worst times, without censure or without many unsuccessful attempts towards their reformation. The Church of Christ has always had some faithful members, who have zealously borne witness to the truth. In the East those who

* See Bp. Newton on the Prophecies, Vol. III. p. 147—197.

opposed

opposed the prevailing corruptions were often ^b called by general and ambiguous names *Maffaliani* or *Euchitæ*; as those of the West were called *Waldenses* or *Albigenses*. The former were confounded with wild and irrational ^c heretics of various descriptions; and this was the case also with many of the latter. Men, who smarted under their censures, would certainly attempt by every means to lessen their credit: and such men, it must be confessed, often had good foundation for the charges which they retorted upon their censurers. For, it cannot be matter of wonder that the professors of Christianity, who condemned the abuses of it in those ages, should often have wanted knowledge and ^d coolness of judgement to point out a proper remedy for the exorbitant evils, of which they complained; or that they should often have contradicted each other in matters of the greatest consequence. But, however these friends to reformation might differ in other respects, they were ^e unanimous in asserting that the vulgar Religion was false, and

^b Jortin's Remarks, Vol. V. p. 215.

^c Concerning the *Maffaliani* or *Euchitæ* see Cave's Hist. Lit. Vol. II. p. 199: and concerning the *Waldenses* or *Albigenses* see the same work, Vol. II. p. 182.—Bp. Newton on the Prophecies, Vol. III. p. 171, &c.—And Jortin's fourth Charge, Sermons, Vol. VII. p. 436, 437.

^d Collier's Eccl. Hist. Vol. I. p. 625 and 697.

^e Jortin's Remarks, Vol. V. p. 386.

that

that the Popes were usurpers. And however ignorant and injudicious some of them may appear to have been; yet there were in the midst of the dark ages men, who were advocates for a ^f rational profession of Christianity, and who knew the proper means by which it was to be promoted. While ^g Arnold of Brescia displays the most distinguished zeal and learning in opposition to the corruptions of the twelfth century; Bishop ^h Grossthead, Wickliff, and Hufs prove in the ⁱ three centuries, which immediately followed, that such zeal and learning were, moreover, united at times with judgement in support of true Christianity long before the successful commencement of any reformation in its public profession. It was not before the means of acquiring just and

^f See Bp. Jewell's Apology for the Church of England, p. 93—96.

^g Arnold preached in the 12th century for many years with great success in Rome itself against the secular power of the Pope and the Clergy. He fell, however, at length an unhappy victim to his zeal, being burnt in the year 1155. Mosheim, Vol. III. p. 119. See also with regard to Arnold Bp. Newton on the Prophecies, and the Authors cited by him on the occasion, Vol. III. p. 169.

^h A fate similar to Arnold's would certainly have befallen our learned Bishop Grossthead; if the Pope had not been afraid to proceed to extremities against him. Jortin's Rem. Vol. V. p. 365. See also concerning Grossthead Collier's Eccl. Hist. Vol. I. p. 460—2, and Bp. Newton on the Prophecies, Vol. III. p. 181.

ⁱ Grossthead flourished about the year 1235: Wickliff about 1360: and Hufs was cited to answer for his Opinions in 411.

distinct notions of sacred and profane learning had been supplied, nor before such notions had been widely diffused, that any general reformation of our Religion was undertaken with success. The ^k schism of the Antipopes and other internal causes of decay certainly shook the Papal throne; but the whole foundation of Papal tyranny was undermined by the prevalence of sound and discriminating learning. Christianity had been first propagated in an age of such learning, and was again to revive with it: though not, indeed, before true Religion had once more experienced the worst effects from superstition. The evils, which had flowed from the superstition and idolatry of the Heathen world, were again experienced under the corruptions of Christianity. ^l Protagoras, Diagoras, and others among the ancients had been made Atheists by the wretched

^k It was during this schism that Wickliff escaped in England, by the interposition of the nobles, from two different attempts, which the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Clergy made to destroy him. Fuller's Hist. Cent. xiv. p. 136.

^l Stillingfleet's Orig. Sac. p. 10.

Sherlock says in his discourse on Providence, "The universal deluge and the confusion of languages had so abundantly convinced mankind of a divine power and Providence; that there was no such creature as an Atheist, till their ridiculous idolatries had tempted some men of wit and thought rather to own no God, than such as the Heathens worshipped." P. 204.

idolatry

idolatry of their country : and ^m schools of Atheism are said to have been actually opened in Italy towards the close of the dark night of Christian idolatry. Or rather this may be deduced in both instances from the application of an unsound philosophy to the devices of a most degenerate superstition. And indeed it is an effect too sensibly experienced at present in countries, distinguished by such philosophy and such superstition. But accuracy in human learning and a knowledge of true Christianity were at length to be united and to prevail.

No sooner did the stores of literature, which in the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries had been imported from Constantinople and even under ⁿ Papal patronage multiplied by the arts of Western Europe, excite a ^o general zeal

^m Jortin's Rem. Vol. V. p. 500. Paracelsus, Rabelais, and Montague issued from this School. And, probably, those Epicurean Atheists of whom Erasmus observes that none exclaimed louder against Luther's errors ; (Jortin's Life of Erasmus, Vol. I. p. 283.) and of whom he appears to speak when he says, " Ego Romæ hæc auribus audivi quosdam abominandis blasphemis debacchantes in Christum, et in illius Apostolos : idque multis mecum audientibus, et quidem impune. Ibidem multos novi qui commemorabant se dicta horrenda audiisse a quibusdam sacerdotibus aulæ Pontificiæ ministris, idque in ipsa missa, tam clare ut ea vox ad multorum aures pervenerit.

Jortin's Life of Erasmus, Vol. I. p. 507.

ⁿ That particularly of pope Nicolas the 5th. Mosh. Vol. III. p. 391.

^o The education, which Henry the 7th (who was an illiterate Prince) gave to his Son Henry the 8th, and which Henry the 8th gave not only to his Son Prince Edward, but also to

among the Latins for the study of the learned languages, and particularly of the original ^p Scriptures; than Luther arose at the commencement of the next century not only to declaim, like his predecessors in reformation, against the corruptions of the Romish Church; but also to separate a considerable part of Western Christendom from it. How far ^q separations may warrantably be made from the established Religion, it is easy enough at present to determine. When we have essential objections to oppose to fundamental articles of it; we are justifiable in deserting it. Prior and

both his Daughters Mary and Elizabeth, and the learning of King James may serve to show the zeal excited at this time in favour of the learned languages.

^p The Scriptures, said the Bp. of Hereford in support of Cranmer, were commonly studied by the Laity in the original languages, and, therefore, it was in vain to think they could be governed by the arts, which in the former ages of ignorance had been so effectual. Burnet's Hist. of the Ref. Vol. I. p. 214.

Among those who were distinguished about the time of the Reformation as the great revivers of literature both sacred and profane, Erasmus stands foremost. He, as was commonly said of the Reformation, laid the egg, and Luther hatched it. Bp. Stillingfleet expressly says, "It was not Luther or Zuinglius that contributed so much to the Reformation as Erasmus, especially among us in England. For Erasmus was the man who awakened men's understandings, and brought them from the Friar's Divinity to a relish of general Learning."

It is remarkable that Erasmus's Edition of the Greek Testament was published in 1516, the year before the commencement of Luther's Reformation. Before this publication Stillingfleet says there was not above one Greek Testament to be found in all Germany. Jortin's Life of Erasmus, Vol. II. p. 64.

^q See on this subject Chillingworth's Safe-Way, &c. Folio, 4th Edit. 1674. p. 196—240.

invincible

invincible obligations to truth demand such conduct from us. That it was difficult for men to determine this question in ages of ignorance, superstition, and persecution, is exceedingly probable: that it was both dangerous and difficult to effect any religious separation under such circumstances cannot be doubted. † Luther, however, succeeded in the arduous attempt. Early in the 16th century this learned advocate for religious liberty and truth dared publicly to arraign both the tyranny and superstition of the Romish Church. Whatever were his original motives of action, it is certain that he was the great instrument, which Providence was pleased to use in the reformation of our Religion, and that through his † unparalleled courage and perseverance

† See a short and excellent account of him in Cave's Hist. Lit. Vol. II. p. 249—250. Append.

‡ "Luther had as much courage as Alexander and Julius Cæsar put together." Jortin's Life of Erasmus, Vol. I. p. 258. He was, as Cave says, "vir si quis alius invicti atque imperterriti animi." Hist. Lit. Vol. II. App. p. 250. Though he had the perfidious and cruel treatment of Hufs before his eyes, he ventured to defend his cause in an open disputation with the Romanists. What his danger on the occasion was, we may infer from the reproaches, with which the Emperour Charles loaded himself for having suffered him to retire afterwards under the solemn engagement, which had been made for his personal safety. When the affairs of the poor Protestants about the year 1530 were so bad in all appearance, that Melancthon was quite dejected and overwhelmed with sorrow, Jortin says (Life of Erasmus, Vol. I. p. 500) that Luther, who had more courage, wrote him many excellent letters of consolation. It may be remarked even with regard to the violence, which appears

those nations of Northern Europe, which had been converted to Christianity by the † sword, were among the first who had an unrestrained access to the holy Scriptures. From his time Christianity began to assume its genuine appearance. And so much were mankind pleased with the prospect, which now opened upon them, that Luther did not long stand forth the sole adversary of Papal corruption. He was soon joined by adherents, sufficient in number and influence to ensure, under Providence, the security of his person and the future success of his cause. And though these, like former advocates for reformation, might differ from each other in particular tenets; yet, like those also, they universally agreed in the necessity of pulling down that fabrick of pride and superstition, which had so long been venerated in the See of Rome.

Were it possible within the limits of the present Discourse to investigate the progress of the Reformation, which ensued in different

to have been the consequence of Luther's undaunted spirit, that it was really necessary under his circumstances. He could not have been supported against the Church of Rome, except by an open breach and force of arms. Had he fallen in with the mild and timid measures, so often recommended to him by Erasmus; the Reformation in Germany would soon have been stifled by a bloody inquisition, as it was in Spain and other Countries.

† See the last Sermon.

countries ;

countries; the investigation would certainly furnish us with much useful entertainment. It would furnish us, however, at the same time with discoveries, humiliating to the pride of man. We should find that some of the worst passions of our nature were exerted by injudicious zeal in the propagation of truth; and that persecutions of the most cruel kind were used to influence religious Faith, in a greater or less degree, by every "reformed Communion. We should find also (to say nothing of the enormous opinions of ' Socinus

" Dean Tucker, in his Letters to Dr. Kippis, says, (p. 31.) "strange as it is to tell, there was not a man of all the numerous "Sects of Protestants at their first separation from the Church of "Rome, who so far entered into the spirit of the Reformation, "or was so far consistent with his own principles, as to allow "to others the liberty which he claimed to himself." And p. 32.) he says farther, "the idea of being a consistent Pro- "testant never entered into the head of any man for upwards "of seventy years after the Reformation began." Even Melancthon justified the burning of Servetus for heresy or blasphemy, as he calls it. Jortin's 4th Charge, Sermons, Vol. VII. p. 440:

We know in our own country that heretics were not only put to death in the time of Henry the 8th, Edward the 6th, and Elizabeth; but also so late as in the 9th year of James the first. Fuller's Hist. Cent. xvii. p. 64.

Our law for burning heretics was first made in the Reign of Hen. 4. Fuller. Cent. xv. p. 158. It was repealed in the year 1677. The repeal was moved for by the Duke of York. Collier's Eccl. Hist. Vol. II. p. 897.

∨ Lælius and Faustus Socinus were the founders of the Sect, which bears their name. Lælius, having conceived a disgust against Popery, and disapproving of many of the doctrines of the Church, left Tuscany (his country) in 1547; about thirty years after the commencement of Luther's Reformation. And,

and his followers which were propagated on this occasion) that many of the bright ornaments of the Reformation were not able to disengage themselves from error in ^v important doctrines of our Religion; and that this was by no means effected even by Luther himself. But my design will be accomplished and the limits of the present discourse filled up; if, after this notice of the Reformation in general, I confine the following observations to our own Church, and consider its condition at the commencement of the Reformation, and the manner in which this Reformation was so introduced and perfected among ourselves, as to deliver down the profession of our Religion to us with all those peculiar advantages, under which we have received it.

having passed four years in visiting France, England, Holland, Geneva, and Poland, he at length settled at Zurich in Switzerland; where he died in the year 1562 and in the 37th year of his age. Although he adopted the Helvetic confession of Faith and professed himself a member of the Church of Switzerland; he entertained doubts with regard to certain doctrines of Religion, which he communicated to some learned men whose judgement he respected, and in whose friendship he could confide. However his sentiments were propagated in a more public manner after his death; as Faustus his nephew and heir is supposed to have drawn from the papers, which he left behind him, that religious system, upon which the sect of Socinians is founded. See Chambers's Dictionary—Socinians. And with regard to the doctrines of the Socinians, see what Waterland says in his *Lady Moyer's Sermons*, p. 13.

^w Concerning the Eucharist, and Predestination.

As

As error generally increases in proportion to its distance from its fountain, and to the number of channels through which it is conveyed; it is reasonable to expect that England should not only have partaken of all the Romish corruptions in common with the rest of Western Christendom, but also that it should have experienced more sensibly, than other countries, the burden of Papal superstition and oppression. And * this appears, in reality, to have been at length the case. Our ancestors were not involved in equal corruptions of their Religion with the other members of the Romish Communion in the early parts of their History: but they appear to have surpassed all others in this unhappy respect during the three y hun-

* Burnet in the preface to his history of the Reformation speaks of the Church of England as a Church, "which, being subjected to the See of Rome, had been more than every other part of Europe most tame under its oppressions, and was most deeply drenched in its superstition." P. 9. Bp. Newton says in his Dissertations, Works, Vol. II. p. 619. 410. "England was once the paradise of Priests; here they swarmed and fixed like locusts: but the Reformation has freed us from that yoke." And Jortin asserts that "of all Protestant nations there is perhaps not one which hath suffered so much from Popery as ours, nor one which hath more reason to dread and abhor that Religion. England for some centuries before the Reformation was the most Pope-ridden country in Christendom," &c. 3d Charge: Sermons, Vol. VII. p. 406. y England had for above 300. years been the tamest part of Christendom to the Papal Authority, and had been accordingly dealt with." Burnet's Hist. of the Ref, Vol. I. p. 11.

dred years which immediately preceded the Reformation.

Christianity was professed at a very ^z early period by the Britons, and ^a flourished for many ages among them without ^b dependence on any foreign Church, till Augustine the Monk was sent from Rome in the ^c sixth century to convert the Saxons. Before that time the Britons of both North and South Wales were distinguished by eminent ^d seminaries of Christian education, and, as it appears, of genuine Christianity. The ^e Arian heresy had

^z See Stillingfleet's Orig. Britan. p. 35—48. Towards the end of this part of his work he produces arguments to prove that the Gospel was planted in Britain by St. Paul. The same is insisted on by Jewell—Works, p. 11.

^a Stillingfleet's Orig. Brit. p. 74. and Jewell's Works, p. 11, 12.

^b See Stillingfleet's Orig. Brit. p. 108—144, and p. 356—364: and also Bingham's antiquities, b. ix. c. 1. sect. 11.

^c As is commonly supposed in the year 596. Johnson however in the preface to his dictionary places it in the year 570. Hist. of the Engl. Lang. p. 1.

^d Bangor in North Wales and Caerlion in South Wales were the two grand seminaries of Christianity in the 6th century. To these many of the learned at that time resorted for instruction. Fuller's Hist. Cent. vi. p. 40. Stillingfleet says of Bangor "that men were bred up in it to learning and devotion together; and so it more resembled our colleges than the Egyptian Monasteries." Orig. Brit. p. 205.

^e See Stillingfleet's Orig. Brit. p. 175. Fuller's Hist. Cent. v. p. 27. and Collier's Eccl. Hist. Vol. I. p. 37.

Though Bede says, l. i. c. 8. that Arianism had infected Britain, as well as other places; yet Smith in his Note on the passage subjoins, "E testimoniis Constantini, Athanasii, Hilarii, &c. abunde patet episcopus Britanniae fidei orthodoxae semper adhæsisse." Smith's Edit. of Bede, p. 47.

been

been soon suppressed among them. And on Augustine's ^f arrival the poor British Christians were found enjoying God, the Gospel, and their mountains, neither regarding nor acquainted with the ceremonies, which this missionary had brought with him. When he assembled a council of the British and Saxon Bishops; the former ^g disclaimed all knowledge of the Bishop of Rome and all dependence upon him. Their religious institutions also were rational and simple: they had the use of the pure ^h liturgy of the old Gallican Church; had no ⁱ image-worship; and no ^k Monks, but

^f Fuller's Hist. Cent. vi. p. 57, &c.

^g Fuller's Hist. Cent. vii. p. 61. The answer of the Abbot of Bangor to Augustine is well worthy of our particular attention both on account of the Spirit of Christian charity, and the spirit of independence, which are conspicuous in it. "Notum fit et absque dubitatione vobis quod nos omnes sumus et qui libet nostrum obedientes et subditi ecclesiæ Dei et Papæ Romæ, et unicuique vero et pio Christiano ad amandum unumquemque in suo gradu in perfecta charitate; et ad juvandum unumquemque eorum verbo et facto fore filios Dei: Et aliam obedientiam quam istam non scio debitam in quem vos nominatis esse Papam, nec esse patrem patrum, vindicari et postulari, et istam obedientiam nos sumus parati dare et solvere ei et cuique Christiano continuo."

Spelman's Concilia, Tom. i. p. 108, 109.

^h See Stillingfleet's Orig. Britan. from p. 216. to the end of the fourth Chapter.

ⁱ Image worship was not introduced into England before the 8th century: and then it was subjected to restraints. See Spelman's Council, Tom. i. p. 218. Collier's Eccl. Hist. Vol. I. p. 122, and 214. See also in the last Sermon what is said on the manner in which England, France, &c. received this worship.

^k In Fuller's Hist. B. vi. p. 267. may be seen a declaration very elegantly composed and signed by those four great men,
Robt.

such as were all of the most ancient and temperate order. Even their Saxon conquerors appear to have partaken in some degree of the liberty and purity of the British Christians. The venerable ¹ Bede paid no implicit submission to the Romish Pontiff. And in the 10th and 11th^m centuries, when hardly any traces of Britons were left in England, the Papal power was received with limitation among our ancestors, the Scriptures were generally read by them (notwithstanding what is said to have been the ^a original and contrary intention of the Romish Missionaries) and our Religion was less corrupted in various respects, than that of the neighbouring Kingdoms. William himself, though he conquered under the banners of the Church, refused to submit to any act of fealty to the Pope: indeed, he is said

Robt. Cotton, John Selden, Hen. Spelman, and Wm. Camden, in which they maintain that there had been only two orders of Monks in England, one the Egyptian which flourished before the time of Augustine, the other the Benedictine which flourished afterwards.

Of the Egyptian Monks Eusebius speaks very highly. Eccl. Hist. l. ii. c. 17. Sozomen also says of them that they were remarkably strenuous in their Opposition to Arianism. Eccl. Hist. l. vi. c. 20.

¹ Bede, though often sent for by the Bishops of Rome, never went to them, which is a proof that he neither thought it necessary to obey those Bishops, nor that there was any particular sanctity in Rome. Fuller's Hist. Cent. viii. p. 98.

^m See Cave's Hist. Lit. Vol. II. p. 110. Fuller's Hist. p. 149. and Bp. Newton on the Prophecies, Vol. III. p. 166.

ⁿ See extract from Fleury in Jortin's Rem. Vol. V. p. 174.

to have gone so far, as to ° regulate the power both of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope. In the succeeding Reigns also the Pope's power among us was often restrained by interpositions of the civil authority. But, though our early ancestors were exempt from religious corruption beyond the common standard of their times; and though temporal protection was not wanting in later periods to support both our Church in ^p general, and also many of its ^q particular members, who were laboring to promote the interests of true Christianity; yet did the power of the Romish Church universally prevail at the conclusion of our different contests with it after the tragical end of ^r Becket's violence: and its ° corrup-

° Fuller's Hist. Cent. xi. p. 4. Collier's Eccl. Hist. Vol. I. p. 238: and Mosheim, Vol. II. p. 473. 496.

^p By the constitutions of Clarendon under Hen. II. the statute against forestalling presentations under Edw. III. and the præmunire annexed to it 16 Ric. II.

^q Wickliff, when twice summoned by the Archbishop to answer for his doctrines, was rescued from condemnation by the interposition of the nobles, and having finished his translation of the vulgate Bible died in peace. Fuller, Cent. xiv. p. 136—7. Under the protection of Lord Berkeley, John de Trevisa translated also the Old Testament in the 14th century. Fuller, p. 151. and Cave's Hist. Lit. Vol. II. Sæc. Wickl, p. 58.

^r Erasmus in his Epistles seems to ascribe the great power and wealth of the English Ecclesiastics to the death of Thomas of Becket. Jortin's Life of Erasmus, Vol. I. p. 37. And the exorbitant influence of the Papal power among us may be properly dated from the same event.

^s See Strype's Memorials, Vol. I. p. 46. and p. 382.

tions of every kind went on encreasing among us to such an enormous degree, as to give our ancestors in the days of Luther peculiar reason to rejoice at the prospect, which now opened upon them of a reformed and pure Religion.

However, at the commencement of the Reformation, the forward and † repeated zeal, with which † Henry the Eighth undertook the defence of the established superstition, and the † literary as well as * religious credit, which he acquired from thence, left little reason to hope that his Kingdom would derive any distinguished advantage from the new and prevailing spirit of religious inquiry. But the Almighty, who often makes the self-interested designs of men redound to his glory, soon unexpectedly opened the King's eyes with regard to the usurpations of the Romish Pontiff. The

† The King wrote two letters to Luther. Strype's Mem. Vol. I. p. 58. The second letter was a haughty reply to Luther, when he apologized for the offence given by a letter written in answer to the King's first. Jortin's Life of Erasmus, Vol. I. p. 395.

‡ Erasmus discusses the question, whether Hen. VIII. was really and "proprio Marte" the author of the Book against Luther, and he inclines to the affirmative: not denying, however, that he might have had the assistance of some learned men. Jortin's Life of Erasmus, Vol. I. p. 486.

§ Erasmus pays Henry VIII. very high compliments on his genius. Strype's Append. of Rec. Memorials, Vol. I. p. 274.

* Burnet says K. Henry was brought to fancy his book was written with some degree of inspiration. Pref. Hist. Ref. Vol. I. p. 6.

refusal

refusal of a dispensation to himself soon led the disappointed Prince to enquire into the Pope's right to grant such favours. And enquiry, once set on foot, found too much encouragement to be easily dropped, or to be confined to a single article. This and the other foreign claims of the Romish Church were discovered, on particular examination, to be destitute of support from either reason, or revelation. On this occasion nothing less than a total disavowal of the Papal power and the Romish communion might immediately have been expected; if those prejudices of Henry, which at first had well-nigh prevented all reformation among us, had not now interposed for useful purposes; if they had not interposed to restrain the ardor and vehemence to which religious innovations are eminently liable, and thus laid the foundation of our present Church establishment. It must be confessed, indeed, that many circumstances in the three next Reigns contributed to strengthen and confirm the religious system, which was adopted by the Church of England at the commencement of the Reformation; and that our reformers had an invaluable ^y advantage in choosing their doctrines from not having been engaged in per-

^y See Dean Tucker's Letters to Dr. Kippis.

ſonal altercation with the chief champions for either the Romanifts or their opponents. But, it is no leſs true alſo that the particular mode of our Reformation is principally to be aſcribed to Henry's determined prepoſſeſſion, to the very laſt, in favour of the Romiſh tenets. While the fix articles, which were enforced by him with ſo much cruelty, proved deciſively that this King's efforts and wiſhes for an alienation from the Church of Rome went no farther than was conducive to his own power or profit; they operated at the ſame time as the moſt effectual restraint on all haſty avowals of new opinions in Religion.

It is a juſt obſervation that extremes generate each other: and never was the obſervation more literally verified, than in the reformation which commonly took place in ² foreign countries. Men had been hindered by the moſt cruel oppreſſion from enquiring into the Scriptures. When, therefore, the light of truth broke in at once upon them, its glare was too ſtrong for their fight. The full religious liberty, to which they were at once admitted, led them to exceſſes as fatal as thoſe of the Church of Rome, though in the oppoſite ex-

² A full and admirable account of the principles and proceedings of theſe reformers may be ſeen in the preface to Hooker's Eccl. Pol. from p. 19. to p. 22. Works, Folio Ed. 1666.

treme.

treme. Every thing, which bore a resemblance to that Church, was at ^a length abolished as Antichristian. Nor were institutions tried by their own intrinsic merit, but by the affinity which they bore to the Romish usages. I speak not of those wild Fanatics, who, under the name of Anabaptists, did so much injury to the cause of the reformation about the time of its commencement, and who doubtless ought not to be ranked under any class of reformers. Even ^b Luther had often to lament the enthusiastic errors of his followers: and ^c Calvin was himself so intemperate, that he particularly cautions Bucer against middle or moderate councils.

While, therefore, ^d others went on with enthusiasm and with immoderate excess in their

^a "Every later Church endeavoured to be certain degrees more removed from conformity with the Church of Rome than the rest before had been." Pref. Hooker's Eccl. Pol. p. 2.

^b Mosheim, Vol. IV. p. 315. Luther also cannot be supposed to write concerning the Anabaptist or Mennonite associates of Munzer, but men of his own communion; when he requests of Frederic, Duke of Tuscany, that the enthusiasts, concerning whom he writes, "might be favourably dealt with and spared: for that, (their error excepted) they seemed otherwise right good men." Hooker's Eccl. Pol. Pref. p. 21.

^c Calvin warns Martin Bucer in a letter sent to him, before his coming into England, "against being the author or adviser of middle councils; by which words he plainly strikes at the moderation observed in the English Reformation." Wheatley on the Common Prayer, 8vo. p. 112.

^d See, on this subject in general, Hume's Hist. of England, Vol. III. p. 122, &c. 4to. Ed.

L reformation ;

reformation; Henry's prejudices and overbearing disposition seasonably interposed in England to counterbalance any such spirit, and unintentionally produced among us an unprecedented calmness of deliberation on subjects of religious controversy. The principal points, established and enforced against the Romish Church in his Reign, after the dissolution of those monastic bodies which had for many ages been powerful means of supporting the Papal pretensions, were the disavowal of the Pope's supremacy in these Kingdoms, and of his infallibility; the acknowledgement of a right in every national Church, with the concurrence of its head, to examine into and reform all religious errors and corruptions, whether in Doctrine or Discipline: and, what might be designed to operate as the means of vindicating these infringements on the former government of the Church, the permission of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue. But, whatever might be the political design of this permission of the Scriptures, it operated to the best reli-

^e Burnet's Hist. Ref. Vol. I. p. 255 and 289.

^f Burnet's Pref. to his Hist. Ref.

^g In the Reign of Hen. 8th many of the errors of popery were laid open, and condemned in the "Pia et Catholica Institutio," or, as it was called, when republished six years after, "the Kings Book" or "the necessary Erudition;" but none were obliged to assent to it. Burnet on the Articles, Fol. p. 5. Strype's Eccl. Memor. Vol. I. p. 378 and 381.

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gious purposes. It was the one great thing wanted in the darker ages: and, joined to the permission, which was also superadded in the same Reign, of some of the ^h principal parts of the Liturgy in the vulgar tongue, effectually promoted both the knowlege, and the practice of true Christianity. From these points, ¹ established and enforced by the most ^k determined authority, a general reformation was soon to be expected. The absurdities and impieties of the Romish Church cannot long remain undiscovered by those, who have access to the Scriptures, and who are at liberty to use their own judgement in the interpretation of them. The succeeding Reign, being an entire minority, happily required in the Regents much deliberation before any great alterations were to be made in the old Religion. Happily also the influence of the regal power was sufficient to restrain the effects of any ¹ contrary incli-

^h See Wheatley on the common prayer. And Burnet's Hist. Ref. Vol. I. p. 226 and 249.

ⁱ "Many attempts were made by Gardiner and others to induce the King to deprive the people again of the use of the Scriptures. But Henry the 8th was fully resolved to go through with it." Burnet's Hist. Ref. Vol. I. p. 314.

^k It has been remarked that Hen. 8. resembled Luther in the firmness and inflexibleness of his mind. No other frame of mind could have supported them in the different reformations which they attempted.

¹ There were among our countrymen in the days of Edw. 6. many who wished to run into the excesses of foreign reformers: but they appear to have been neither violent nor troublesome, when compared with others of the same principles in subsequent times.

nation in others. At the time, therefore, when the rulers of our Church were most engaged in its reformation, and most exposed to danger from the ^m advice as well as the example of foreign reformers, they made no ⁿ rash advances. The doctrines of the Romish Church, which had been much and dispassionately ^o canvassed in the preceding Reign, were again examined by men of learning, of judgement, and of candor: and those among them, which were inconsistent with genuine Christianity, were gradually rejected: transubstantiation, which was among the latest corruptions of the Romish Church, and which had made the most durable

^m See, as before, Wheatley on the common prayer, p. 112. 8vo.

ⁿ It was designed by Cranmer and his friends to carry on the reformation by slow degrees, not hazarding too much at once. Burnet's Hist. Ref. Vol. II. p. 25.

See a proclamation against those who should rashly innovate, or persuade people from the old accustomed rites. Burnet's Hist. Ref. Vol. II. p. 59. Strype's Mem. Vol. II. p. 83.

The preachers also were urged to use caution and moderation: not to set the people on to make innovation: and for things not yet changed to wait patiently. Burnet's Hist. Ref. Vol. II. p. 61, 64, 65.

But it is impossible that the principles of the English reformation should be better described than they are by Bp. Jewell in his admirable Apology for our Church: "Nos quidem (says he) uti diximus de mutanda religione nihil temere aut infolenter, nihil nisi cunctanter et magna cum deliberatione fecimus," &c. p. 155.

^o They had many learned men among them who had been "examining these matters many years."

Burnet's Hist. Ref. Vol. II. p. 26.

impression

impression on the minds both of men of ^p learning and of the ^a people in general, being reserved for the ^r last object of our reformation. In the mean time also the ^s opposition, permitted in the Romanists at home, was of no inconsiderable service to the cause against which it was levelled. Since alterations were not made, till the reasonableness and necessity of them had been fully and openly proved. And if, under such circumstances, our reformers were obliged to contend for every step, as they advanced; they and their successors derived this advantage at least from the laborious contention, that the ground, thus gained, was more easily tenable in future times.

While the English Reformation was thus gradually matured, the superintenders of this.

^p Luther was a constant advocate for transubstantiation, or at least for consubstantiation.

Cranmer and Ridley were themselves in the dark concerning the corporal presence, till Bertram's book first convinced Ridley.

Burnet's Pref. to Hist. Ref. Vol. I. p. 10.

^a Burnet says that on account of the prejudices of the people it was necessary to open the doctrine of transubstantiation fully before any change was made in the doctrine of the Church.

Hist. Ref. Vol. II. p. 104.

Again he says, "as to the corporal presence in the Sacrament " there were disputes for a year together in K. Edward's time " before there was any determination made."

Hist. Ref. Vol. II. p. 267. See also p. 110.

^r Hume says it was the last doctrine of Popery which was wholly abandoned by the people; assigning the reasons why it was so. Hist. of Engl. Vol. III. p. 319. 4to. Edit.

^s Strype's Memor. Vol. II. p. 84 and 208.

Burnet's Hist. Ref. Vol. II. p. 105.

great work were careful to make known the different parts of their new establishment. Having finally separated themselves from the Church of Rome, through which they traced back their origin to the apostolical age; it was necessary that they should prove themselves to be a visible Church; and, agreeably to the precepts of the Apostles and the practice of all Christian societies, that they should institute rites and ceremonies, a public form of worship, and particular modes of instruction. And, since the Scriptures are not so explicit in all points, as absolutely to preclude all pernicious doctrines, and the authoritative interpretations of the Church of Rome had been disclaimed; it was necessary also that certain doctrinal expositions and decisions should be set forth to direct the consciences and to guard the faith of the members of their community. Somewhat of this sort had been publicly done by the foreign Protestants in the Aushurg confession. In the Church of England it was done by the Liturgy, the

t 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

u Mosh. Vol. IV. p. 92. There were also many other confessions of the foreign Protestants: but, that of Aushurg was made known to the world in the most public manner.

w Our Liturgy may be said to have commenced in the year 1537, when Henry 8. permitted the Convocation to set forth the Lord's Prayer, Ave Maria, the Creed, the ten commandments, and the seven sacraments in the vulgar tongue. Many of the additions, made to complete it, which are erroneously supposed

the Catechism, the Homilies, and the Articles, which were authoritatively set forth in the Reign of Edward the Sixth. By means of all these whatever appeared to be expedient to an established and national profession of our Religion, in addition to the unrestrained use of the Scriptures, was abundantly supplied. The great duties and principles of Christianity were laid down; and the important errors, as well of the Romanists as of the more violent Protestants both at home and abroad, were particularly guarded against. At the same time the Episcopal government, which had prevailed from the earliest ages of Christianity, was pre-

to have been taken by the reformers from the Romanists, were, as Stillingfleet says, adopted by both the Romanists and our reformers from the old Gallican Liturgy. *Orig. Brit.* p. 231.

And from Cave we may learn that our Service for the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is nearly the same in substance, as that which was used in the primitive Church.

See Cave's *Prim. Christ.* Vol. I. chap. 11.

Our Liturgy was not completed in any degree before the year 1547, when it was published under Edward the VI. See a particular account of the Alterations since made in it, &c. in Wheatley. See also concerning it Strype's *Memor.* Vol. II. p. 85.

* See Strype's *Memor.* Vol. II. p. 32, 368, 420. We are not, however, to suppose that the original Catechism contained all that is found in our Catechism at present. With the exposition of the Lord's Prayer "ended the Catechism in all the common Prayer Books before that of K. James the first, who after the Conference at Hampton Court ordered this latter part concerning the Sacraments to be added." See Dr. Nicholl's on the common Prayer in loc.

† See Burnet's *Hist. Ref.* Vol. II. p. 27.

‡ See the same, p. 209. of the Records.

served inviolate: and our reformers conspicuously displayed their moderation by retaining various parts of the old Liturgies, and as many of the more important usages and ceremonies of the Church, as were innocent and conducive to order and decency. A moderation, which at once restrained the ardor of innovation among their own countrymen, and proved to all mankind that they were desirous to retain whatever was venerable in ecclesiastical antiquity, and to join with the Romanists not only in essential doctrines of Christianity, but also in * all those matters of Church worship, which are in any respect useful and decorous.

Our reformation, having proceeded thus far in the reign of the sixth Edward, was soon after checked in its progress. The reign of Mary was distinguished by a re-establishment of Popish superstition. But, the continuance of her reign was too short to root out the zeal for religious purity, which had so widely extended itself among us. Short however as it was, it involved our Church in many immediate evils, and laid the foundation of number-

* See the Rule which the reformers laid down to change nothing for novelty's sake. Burnet's Hist. Ref. Vol. II. p. 73.

See also an excellent account and vindication of the proceedings of the Church of England in this respect in Hooker's Eccl. Pol. B. iv. c. 14.

less others which we were afterwards to experience. The bloody persecutions, which raged at that time, were without doubt most sensibly felt during their continuance. But, the most extensive evils of those cruelties will be discovered in their remote consequences: in the alteration made in the opinions of some of our English divines concerning predestination, and other concomitant and important doctrines; and in the invincible aversion from our Church, which afterwards prevailed among many of its former members.

Our Liturgy, Catechism, and Homilies, the treatises drawn up for the instruction of the people and the reformation of the ecclesiastical laws under the authority of Hen. VIII. and Edward VI. and the private writings of our original reformers themselves, all prove decisively, that they ^b sided with Erasmus and

^b Bishop Bull says, “ a Calvinum cum disciplina tum doctrina (qua parte ipse a Melancthone aliisque instaurati purioris Christianismi magistris antiquioribus abierit) prorsus alienos fuisse reformationis nostræ auctores satis constat, &c. Apol. pro Harmon. p. 57. And the paraphrase of Erasmus, who wrote against Luther on the doctrine of predestination, is known to have been placed in our Churches for the instruction of the people by both Edward the sixth and Elizabeth. What Mosheim says on the subject ought to be applied to our first reformers: for, it was by them that the doctrine and discipline of our Church were modelled. “ If we consider, says he, the genius and spirit of the “ Church of England during this period (the beginning of the “ 17th century) we shall plainly see that the doctrine of the “ Gomarists concerning predestination and grace could not “ meet there with a favourable reception; since the leading “ doctors

Melancthon, and not with Luther or Calvin, in the doctrines which relate to the divine decrees. And, indeed, our Articles, which have not been ^c materially altered in this respect, prove also the same. For whatever little ^d concession appears to have been made concerning predestination in the 17th Article; it is immediately after withdrawn by the concluding clause of the same Article. A ^e clause, which undoubtedly is not to be construed in a Calvinistic sense, and which from the beginning has been justly deemed to convey the determination of the Church of England on

“doctors of that Church were zealous in modelling its doctrines and discipline after the sentiments and institutions, that were received in the primitive times; and since those early fathers, whom they followed with a profound submission, had never presumed before Augustine to set limits to the extent of the divine grace and mercy.” *Eccl. Hist.* Vol. V. p. 369, 370.

See also Collier’s *Eccl. Hist.* Vol. II. p. 645 and 648: and for the whole of the question concerning the Opinions of our first reformers on the divine decrees see Heylyn’s *Hist. of the Quinquarticular controversy.* Tracts, p. 541—588. See, moreover, able Vindications of our first reformers on the subject before us in Dr. Nowell’s *Reply to Pietas Oxoniensis*, Dean Tucker’s *Letters to Dr. Kippis*, and Dr. Winchester’s *Dissertation on the 17th Article.*

^c See Burnet’s *Hist. Ref.* Vol. II. Records, p. 209.

^d This was made principally to gratify Bucer and Peter Martyr.

^e It refers immediately to a paragraph in the Saxonian confession published by Melancthon in the same year, in which our Articles were first published, which paragraph is proved decisively to be Arminian by the words which follow. See the *Saxonian Confession*, p. 84. in the “*Corpus et Syntagma Confessionum.*” Genææ 1612.

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this important doctrine; as, indeed, was ^f declared and admitted in the religious conference, held in the first year of the next reign after the final establishment of these Articles. But the Lambeth Articles, which were proposed as an addition to the established Articles of our Church, and the subscription of our delegates to the decisions of the Synod of Dort, prove that Calvin's tenets concerning the divine decrees obtained afterwards for a ^g time among some of the rulers of our Church. This change of religious opinion is ^h justly reckoned in the number of the evils, which resulted from the residence of many zealous members

^f Bishop Bancroft at the conference in the first year of James the first declared expressly that the doctrine of the Church of England on the subject of predestination was contained in this concluding clause. And what makes his declaration the more worthy of observation is, that he was one of the four Bishops who signed the Lambeth Articles. To this declaration K. James assented. Fuller's Hist. b. x. p. 11. See also to this effect Collier's Eccl. Hist. Vol. II. p. 676.

Correspondently with this Burnet says, "that the Church of England has wisely avoided the splitting asunder on the high points of divine decrees, which have broken so many of the reformed beyond sea; but in these has left divines to the freedom of their own opinion." Pref. Vol. II. Hist. Ref. p. 15.

^g Our divines were brought back to the Opinions of our first reformers on predestination, &c. by Archbishop Laud and Bishop Bull. Waterland ascribes it to the writings of the latter. Defence, Pref. p. 9.

^h Strype in his Life of Archbishop Whitgift says, "that till about the year 1595 Calvin's way of explaining the divine decrees was not entertained by many learned men in the university of Cambridge: but these opinions were introduced by some of our Divines who during the persecution under Q. Mary had fled to Geneva, Zurich," &c. p. 435.

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of our Communion during Queen Mary's persecution among the advocates for absolute predestination; and to this very day is found both to have a pernicious influence on the faith of some of our injudicious brethren, and to give apparent sanction to the malevolent and ¹ general sarcasms of our enemies.

Other remote and pernicious consequences of the persecution of Queen Mary discover themselves in the invincible aversion from our Church, which prevailed among many of its members, who had been obliged during her Reign to seek for shelter in foreign countries; and who, when the storm which drove them from their Home had spent its fury, returned not with any affection for their old Communion. They had been driven from their country by the persecuting spirit of the Romish

¹ When Mr. Gibbon sarcastically censures the first reformers for their tenets concerning predestination; his censures are qualified by no exceptions, Vol. V. p. 537. It may be remarked with regard to the doctrine of predestination that the discredit of it ought not to be thrown by our adversaries exclusively, or even principally, on the reformers. Though, as Bishop Bull very justly says, "it was never thought of for the four first ages," nor ever after that time by the Greek Church; yet it appears to have been part of the creed of the leading men in the Romish Communion from the time of its great advocate, Augustine, to that of the Reformation. It interfered, however, too evidently with the doctrine of merit to be openly taught by them in the later ages. See Jortin's Life of Erasmus, Vol. 1. p. 335. Dean Tucker's Letters to Dr. Kippis, p. 79; and also Heylyn's Reformation justified, Tracts, p. 510.

Church; they naturally, therefore, carried with them a hatred of this Church: and the example of foreign reformers, adding force and virulence to their private resentments, left them on their return no charity for any establishment, which bore the most distant resemblance to it. These men formed in process of time the original class of avowed Dissenters among us, and from their own form of Church government have been ^k called Presbyterians. During their exile they expressed an ardent desire to ^l alter our Liturgy, and to reduce it to a conformity with that of the French Protestants; though there is no reason to expect that their objections to our Liturgy would have been ^m obviated by this alteration: and, such was the superiority of our own institu-

^k They were before called Puritans from their refusal to subscribe to our Articles &c, and their affectation of superior purity. There were, indeed, men of this sort among us in the days of Edw. 6; but the name of Puritans was not given them before the sixth of Elizabeth. Fuller's Church Hist. Cent. xv. p. 76.

Camden in his Life of Elizabeth says, they showed themselves openly in the 10th of her Reign. P. 107. 3d Ed. Fol.

^l Fuller's Church Hist. C. 16. p. 27: and Collier's Eccl. Hist. Vol. II. p. 392—6. Attempts of this kind were made at Frankfort; and attempts of a similar nature were made also, about the same time, at other places.—See Bale's Letter from Basil in Strype's Memor. Vol. III. p. 107.

^m Mr. Bingham has proved that whatever objections are urged by the Dissenters against the Church of England hold also against the French Church in "the French Church's Apology for the Church of England." Works, Vol. II. Fol. 1726.

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tion, that ⁿ one of high character, who was well acquainted with that Liturgy, is known to have declared soon after, upon a view of our solemn service and ceremonies, “ that if the “ reformed Churches in France had kept the “ same order, there would have been thou- “ sands of protestants more.” Not ^o long after the return of these exiles they proceeded to erect a new form of Church-government, and constituted a regular Presbytery. But how little they were disposed to agree among themselves in any form of divine worship, which might be substituted in the room of the established Liturgy, is well ascertained by the infinite variety of opinions found among them, when they were requested by the great ^p Statesman of that age to draw up such a Liturgy, as they could recommend and approve in all its parts. Whether it arose from an irrecon-

ⁿ Bancroft Bishop of London says to K. James at the conference in the first year of his Reign, “ may it please your Majesty to remember the speech of the French ambassador, “ Monsieur Rognee” (afterwards the famous Duke de Sully), “ upon the view of our solemn Service and ceremonies,” &c. Fuller’s Church Hist. Cent. xvii. p. 13. See also Collier’s Eccl. Hist. Vol. II. p. 677.

^o This was done at Wandsworth in Surry in the year 1573. Collier’s Eccl. Hist. Vol. II. p. 541. Fuller calls it the first-born of all Presbyteries in England: and says (Cent. xvi. p. 103.) that “ *secundum usum Wandsworth*” was as much honoured by the Presbyterians, as “ *secundum usum Sarum*” had been by the Romanists.

^p Burleigh. See Fuller’s Church Hist. Cent. xvi. p. 178.

cilable disagreement among themselves concerning a Liturgy, or from their hatred of the Church of Rome, they soon expressed an aversion from our establishment not only on account of the authority, which it gives to the King as ^a head of the Church, and its ^r Episcopal form of government; but also on account of its admission of ^s set forms of prayer: they, moreover, expressed offence at the habits of the Clergy, the use of Church-music, the sign of the Cross ^t prescribed in the office of baptism, and various other such circumstances; insisting that the Church of England ought to

^a The intention of the Presbyterians, as Bancroft argues, was to transfer the Pope's supremacy to their Presbyteries. Collier's Eccl. Hist. Vol. II. p. 610.

Tho' even Knox (as K. James says) condescended to write to the Queen Regent of Scotland, as soon as Mary had overturned the reformation in England, informing her that she was the supreme head of the Church. Collier's Hist. Vol. II. p. 682.

^r See Camden's Life of Elizabeth, p. 420.

^s The Presbyterian mode of worship seems to have been taken from the alternative permitted under Knox's, or the old, Liturgy in Scotland; to which it is subjoined: "It shall not be necessary for the ministers daily to repeat all these things before-mentioned; but beginning with some manner of confession to proceed to the sermon: which ended, he either useth the prayer for all estates, or else prayeth as the spirit of God shall move his heart, framing the same according to the time and manner, which he hath entreated of."

Collier's Hist. Vol. II. p. 561.

^t Dean Tucker insists in his Letters to Dr. Kippis that the sign of the cross is used with us after, not at, Baptism: and says that he thinks all the loud clamors of the dissenters against our ceremonies terminate in this, and the act of kneeling at the Sacrament. P. 23.

conform

conform in all respects to the usages of foreign Protestants, and proceeding by degrees to a rage for innovation which was scarcely exceeded by the wildest enthusiasm of antecedent reformers.

To guard, therefore, that most invaluable moderation, with which we were so peculiarly blessed at the commencement of our reformation, it was found necessary after the restoration of our Church under Elizabeth to ^u provide it with new barriers against the enthusiasm of innovation. This was done by alterations made in the Articles, by the Canons which were enforced during the Reign of ^v Elizabeth, and by the ^x requisition of a strict conformity to the ecclesiastical establishment.

The ^y alterations, made at that time in the Articles, were not succeeded, like ^z those made at the same time in the Liturgy, that other distinguished part of our system, by new alte-

^u The steps, taken by Q. Elizabeth to restore and perfect the reformation among us, were conducted by the same kind of deliberation, which prevailed in her Brother's Reign. See what Camden says very particularly on the subject—Life of Eliz. p. 31.

See also Burnet's Hist. of Ref. Vol. II. p. 376, 378, 381, 407.

^w Gibson's Codex, Pref. p. 10.

^x Camden's Life of Eliz. p. 191—2 and 288.

^y These alterations were made by learned and moderate divines. Camden's Life of Eliz. p. 16.

^z See an account of the subsequent alterations of the Liturgy in Wheatley.

rations at subsequent periods, in order to advance our established forms to their present state of excellence: but these Articles have^a thenceforward remained the same^a unvaried compendium of our national Faith. As Bp. Bull says, “they are not proposed as essentials of Religion, without which no man can be saved: these are supposed to be contained in the old Creeds, and therefore the old Creeds are made parts of our Liturgy, and are to be joined in by all.” We are to consider the Articles, as a summary of our Religion, calculated to preserve union and peace among all the members of our Church, and to ascertain and regulate the belief and doctrines of those among us, who are intrusted with the care of public instruction.

As these Articles are the great medium, through which, under the Scriptures, our Religion is delivered down to us, it may form an useful part of the present plan; if I endeavour to represent in a connected manner the general substance of them: since such a representation of their contents must at once evince that they in reality comprehend nothing more, than the doctrines of Scripture, expressed so

^a Burnet's Hist. Ref. Vol. II. p. 195.

^b Bull's Vindication of the Church of England, 8vo. p. 217.

^c Burnet on the Articles, Fol. P. 6—8.

as to ascertain our own Faith, and guarded by particular declarations against the dangerous opinions of others.

They begin with the principal of those great doctrines of our Religion, which were preserved entire during the darker ages: they begin with ^d asserting not only that all things were created and are preserved by one all-perfect God, but also that three Persons are comprehended under the Unity of the divine nature: they then ^e go on to assert that the Son or second Person is really God, being begotten of the Father by an eternal generation; that to redeem us from our fallen condition he vouchsafed to assume human nature into the same Person with his own; that our Redeemer or Christ, being thus compounded of the divine and human nature, died for our sins, ^f descended to the regions below, and afterwards ^g rose again and ascended into Heaven, there to remain till he returns to be our judge: that the Holy ^h Ghost or third Person, by an incomprehensible derivation of existence, different from the generation of the Son, proceeded from the two other Persons of the Godhead, and is also himself really and eternally God. Going on to the Scriptures, that great

^d Art. 1.^e Art. 2.^f Art. 3.^g Art. 4.^h Art. 5.

repository of our Religion, which was now happily laid open again for general use, our Articles insist on the sufficiency of ^l Scripture to salvation, to the exclusion undoubtedly of all intermixture of philosophical speculation, no less than of all Romish tradition: they state separately the Canonical and the other books; and are careful not to diminish, with the Church of Rome, the authority of divine Inspiration by extending its infallibility to the Apocryphal writings: they then affirm the ^k consistency of the Old Testament with the New, with regard to eternal life no less than other doctrines; and the eternal obligation of its moral precepts. Having adopted the same three ^l Creeds with the Romish Church, our Articles proceed to the great reason, which made a Redeemer necessary for us, and to the parts of our Religion which are intimately connected with it. In mentioning the fall of Adam they say nothing of any guilt immediately derived to us from it: they say, only, that human nature being in consequence of this fall inherently ^m corrupt, and such as would of itself merit the wrath and ⁿ damnation of

^l Art. 6. ^k Art. 7. ^l Art. 8. ^m Art. 9.

ⁿ As the corruption, here spoken of, is said to extend to every man born into the world; our article only asserts that it merits the wrath and damnation (or condemnation) of God; and not, as it is expressed in the confessions of Aulburgh, Saxony, and Wirtemburgh, and implied in all the other Protestant confessions

God; the grace of God, to be derived to us through the merits of Christ, is necessary to excite in us, and to co-operate with our own ° will in perfecting, such a faith and conduct, as will render us acceptable to God: that, as far as relates to ourselves, the sole ^p cause of this our acceptance, or justification, is faith in the merits of Christ; a faith, notwithstanding, which does not exclude, but on the contrary ^q necessarily produces and sanctifies, good

on the subject, “his eternal damnation.” See “Corpus at Syn-
tagma Confessionum” published at Geneva in the year 1612.

Doubtless, it was not without very particular design that the word “eternal” was here omitted by our reformers: as we must infer also with regard to every similar omission, where a doctrine has been long canvassed and the force of any question concerning it depends upon the part which is omitted. This observation applies not less powerfully to our 17th than to our 9th Article. ° Art. 10. ^p Art. 11.

^q Art. 12. The fervor, which led many of the more violent reformers to the opposite extreme from the Church of Rome in other doctrines, had the same effect with regard to justification. In opposition to what was commonly taught of the merit of works in the Romish Church these reformers insisted so entirely on justification by faith alone, as to exclude any consequent necessity of good works. The learned and judicious Dr. Redmayn was commanded by Cranmer to enquire into this subject, and to write a treatise on it. In this treatise Dr. R. says, “that in
“ those Scriptures, where it is said we are justified by faith, we
“ may not think we are justified by faith, as it is a separate
“ virtue from hope, and charity, fear of God, and repentance;
“ but by it is meant faith, neither only nor alone but with the
“ foresaid virtues coupled together, containing obedience to the
“ whole doctrine and Religion of Christ.” But for the definition
“ of faith, which some proposed as if there was a certainty that
“ one was predestinated, they found nothing of it either in the
“ Scriptures or the Doctors, and thought that it could not be
“ known.” Burnet’s Hist. Ref. Vol. I. p. 287—8. See also
con-

works in us : that, however, these good^r works, being perfected in their principle and rendered acceptable to God only through this faith in Christ, are without such faith to be considered as partaking of sin : that works of ^rsupererogation are arrogant conceits ; since, even if we do all that is commanded us, we are unprofitable servants, and Christ ^ronly has done what was commanded : that our sins, as well ^uafter as before baptism, are pardonable ; man being at all times exposed to sin, and through the grace of God capable of repentance and reformation. Our Articles then say nothing of reprobation : they say concerning ^wpredestination to life, that it is the determination of certain

concerning justification the Articles drawn up in Hen. VIIIth's Reign—Apendix to Strype's Memor. Vol. I. p. 301 : and the 4th Article concerning justification, Strype's Memor. Vol. III. p. 141. See, moreover, the Homily on Salvation which must be referred to justification. Indeed, that the English reformers meant to represent the necessity of good works in the most forcible manner appears from hence, that they set up the Creed and the ten Commandments in the Room of the Romish Pixis. Dean Tucker says in his Letters to Dr. Kippis : “ this instance of the “ creed and ten commandments being set up over the altar is I “ think peculiar to our English Church.” It was, however, at a very early period introduced with the English reformation into Ireland. It is stated in a citation from Archbishop Usher that George Brown Archbishop of Dublin in the reign of Hen. VIIIth having removed all superstitious relicks and images from the two Cathedrals in Dublin and from all the Churches in his Diocese “ caused the ten commandments, the Lord's “ prayer, and the creed to be placed in gilded frames about “ the altars.” Mosh. Eccl. Hist. Vol. IV. p. 127.

^r Art. 13. ^s Art. 14. ^t Art. 15. ^u Art. 16. ^w Art. 17.

persons to eternal happiness through Christ by a decree of God, which is kept secret from us, and which may result (consistently with whatever our Church has here asserted) from his fore-knowledge of their compliance with the conditions of the Christian covenant; that the consideration of this doctrine, though comfortable and useful to some, may be attended with dangerous consequences to others; and that from * thence we are to receive the promises of God, as they are generally set forth to us in Scripture: moreover, that we can be saved by no name whatever, but that of † Christ; to the exclusion of other Religions from equal powers of procuring salvation with the Christian, and to the exclusion also of all corruptions of Christianity by the adoration of fictitious intercessors. After this, our Articles declare, with regard to the Church, that, though composed of true believers, it is liable to ‡ err, whether it be the Church of Rome, or any other: that the § power of the Church extends to rites and ceremonies, and the regulation of disputable matters in controversies of

* See what is before said to prove that the doctrine of the Church of England on predestination is contained in this concluding clause. See also Dr. Winchester's able dissertation on the 17th Article, published at Oxford in the year 1773: in which it is very fully proved concerning the Article in general, that it was not drawn up conformably to the doctrine of Calvin.

† Art. 18.

‡ Art. 19.

§ Art. 20.

faith;

faith; but that it is not to be opposed to the Scriptures, nor placed on a level of enacting authority with them: that ^b general councils themselves are composed of fallible members, and that these ought not to be assembled without the consent of the civil power: that the Romish Church (however authorised by general councils) has erred in whatever it has taught concerning ^c purgatory, indulgences, the worshipping of images and relicts, and the invocation of Saints. Our Articles then maintain, with the injunctions of the Romanists, that ministers in the Church are to be lawfully appointed; but they condemn that great source of corruption in the darker ages, the use of ^e unknown languages in their ministrations. With regard to the Sacraments, they agree with the Church of Rome in some respects and differ from it in others: they agree with it that ^f bad men are rather to expect a curse than a blessing from a participation of the holy Supper; that the administration of the Sacraments by ^g unworthy ministers does not take from their efficacy; that Baptism is to be administered to ^h infants; and that both Baptism and the Lord's Supper are not only external ⁱ signs of our profession, but likewise means

^b Art. 21. ^c Art. 22. ^d Art. 23. ^e Art. 24.

^f Part of Article 25 and 29. ^g Art. 26.

^h Part of Art. 27. ⁱ Part of Art. 27 and of Art. 28.

of internal Grace. Our Articles differ, however, from the doctrines of the Romanists with regard to the ^k number of the Sacraments; ^l condemn their refusal of the cup to the laity, their doctrine of ^m transubstantiation, and its consequences, the carrying about and worshipping of the consecrated elements, as if they were Christ's real body; and declare at length, in opposition to all the doctrines of the Romish Church to the contrary, that the atonement made for the sins of the world was ⁿ perfected by Christ's oblation of himself, once offered. After the account of the Sacraments, which closes the doctrinal parts of Christianity in our Articles, as it closes also at present the religious instruction given us in our Church Catechism; we have eight Articles, independent of each other, and, in general, designed to secure us against positions of our adversaries, whether Romanists or Sectaries. These contain a condemnation of the injunction of ^o celibacy on the Clergy; an assertion that ^p excommunicated persons are not to be considered as Christians; that ^q ceremonies, though not necessarily the same in all places, are, however, not to be wantonly

^k Part of Art. 25.

^l Art. 30.

^m Part of Art. 28.

ⁿ Art. 31.

^o Art. 32.

^p Art. 33.

^q Art. 34.

violated,

violated, and that they are subject to no regulation, except that of the particular Church by which they are appointed. They contain also an enumeration and adoption of our Church's Homilies: an assertion, that our ordinations and consecrations are valid; that the governour of the state is governour also of the Church, but that his ecclesiastical government is confined to the externals of Religion; that the Bishop of Rome has no jurisdiction in England; that the civil power may punish Christians with death; and that Christians may, at the command of that power, carry arms and serve in war. Of the two last of the eight independent Articles one declares that the goods of Christians are not common: the other that oaths may be administered on lawful occasions.

Such is the general substance of the thirty-nine Articles of our Church. That they should convey to us so excellent a compendium of our Religion, and be so little calculated to give offence, even in the parts where they are immediately directed against our adversaries, may appear surprising to those, who consider the offence and calumny, with which they have been received.

^r Art. 35.

^s Art. 36.

^t Art. 37.

^u Art. 38.

^w Art. 39.

It is obvious that they are principally intended to ascertain and deliver down those essential doctrines of Christianity, which may be collected from the general account that I have above given of the substance of our Religion. The remaining parts of them are as obviously directed against the dangerous opinions of our different adversaries. That, which is omitted in them on this latter head, was supplied in a considerable degree under Elizabeth by the Canons, which she enforced during her Government. It has since been more permanently provided for by the body of * Canons, which were enacted in the first year of her successor's reign ; and which at present describe and enforce the different parts of our ecclesiastical system.

* Towards the end of the Reign of Hen. VIII (after the business of the Reformation had been a long while suspended) a commission was granted to 32 persons to revise the Canons and ecclesiastical laws. In Edward the sixth's time 8 out of these 32 were empowered to prepare this work for the inspection of the others. What these eight drew up was inspected accordingly, and was published in Latin under the title of "reformatio legum." What is the general substance of this work, and why it was not enforced, may be seen in the 2d Volume of Burnet's Hist. Ref. p. 195—202. See also on this subject Strype's Memor. Vol. II. p. 341 and 497, and Fuller's Church Hist. Cent. xvi. p. 420.

Our Canons, now in force, were made in the first year of James the first. They are 141 in number : and many of them are the same with those enforced by Elizabeth during her Reign : (Gibson's Codex, Pref. p. 10 :) There were Canons afterwards drawn up by Archbishop Laud : but, these were censured by Parliament, and, therefore, not enforced.

These

These are intended to supply the place of the Canons and Decretals of the Romish Church: but, with a spirit essentially different from that of the Romish Communion, they profess to ^yoriginate from the civil power. Though they were particularly designed for the ^zenforcement of the doctrines, Liturgy, and ceremonies of our Church; yet all, who know with what mildness and with what unlimited forbearance they have been actually applied to this purpose, must ever acknowledge that the application of them has been well suited to the toleration ^asanctioned in time by our civil government, and to the moderation,

^y Strype (in his Memor. Vol. I. p. 130.) says that the Convocation appears to have submitted to make no more Ordinances or Constitutions without the King's assent or license in the year 1530. Collier says that the Clergy were restrained from making new Canons without the consent of the Crown in the year 1532. Eccl. Hist. Vol. II. p. 70.

See the opinions of the two chief Justices, which were given 8 James I, against the power of the Clergy to make Canons without the King's license in Dean Wake's State of the Church and Clergy of England in their councils. Fol. P. 534.

Bp. Sherlock says the dissenters do not give such power to the civil Magistrate with regard to themselves. In this respect, therefore, they agree with the Romanists, Sherlock against the repeal of the Test-Act. P. 33.

^z Those, who are disposed to complain of the coercive authority of our Church, would do well to enquire into the discipline of the primitive Christians. Of this they may see a concise Account in the last chapter of Cave's Primitive Christianity.

^a By the toleration-act passed in the first year of William and Mary, &c.

which

which so eminently distinguishes the other parts of the ecclesiastical establishment, which they are calculated to defend and complete.

But under such circumstances of universal toleration we must not wonder if there are among us Dissenters of very different origins from that, which I have above mentioned. Wherever men enjoy an unlimited freedom of publishing their thoughts on religious subjects, there will be an endless variety of religious profession. We must not wonder that the worst tenets of the different Sectaries, which have distracted foreign nations, should at times be adopted by our countrymen; nor that heresies and schisms of the most malignant and obdurate nature should every day originate among ourselves.

Situated also as our Church is, at an equal distance from superstition and enthusiasm, we, moreover, must not wonder, if it has from the beginning been exposed to ^b repeated assaults from both these extremes. Immediately after its final establishment, during the Reigns of Elizabeth and James, it experienced the effects of the malicious combinations and dark

^b “The Protestant Church of England has enjoyed but little peace from its first establishment.” Sherlock against the repeal of the Test-Act. p. 25.

assassination of Romish superstition. In the succeeding Reign it fell for a season a sacrifice to the mad^c enthusiasm of our own Dissenters. One Reign only intervened, and that certainly not favourable to true Religion, before it again experienced the malice of the Romish Church. From such assaults it would be ungratefully impious not to confess that the hand of Providence delivered us during our distress; and that it has also preserved us unhurt, though not unalarmed, by them during the last hundred years. And however this restless malevolence of our enemies may have called forth particular tests for our security, and still render it necessary that we should support them, as we hitherto have done, with unshaken resolution; yet, amidst all our exertions in our own defence, has it not in any degree lessened the moderation of our Government, either civil or ecclesiastical, so as to restrain it from every day more widely extending its toleration to all those, who differ from us in religious belief. May God grant that we may ever continue to imitate our predecessors both in courage and wisdom to main-

^c See in the Preface to Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, the real origin and foundation of this enthusiasm; as they were described by that excellent man at a time when he could hardly think this enthusiasm would ever proceed to that excess of madness, by which it was afterwards so eminently distinguished.

tain the invaluable establishment, under which our Religion has thus been delivered down to us, and in Christian virtue to forgive and tolerate our most uncharitable opponents !

Such, then, are the great outlines of the history of our Religion from its complete publication after the resurrection of Christ to our own times.

Having been preached by the Apostles under the miraculous assistance of the Holy Spirit, and provision having been made for its permanency and integrity, it appears from that time to have been left in an eminent degree to our own reason and our own free will. Accordingly its reception and influence in the early ages were such, as we might expect from our present knowledge of its genuine excellence. It was offered to the free judgement of mankind ; was received by the sincere and humble ; and produced such visible effects on their conduct, as to go on increasing by the same gentle means, till it became the Religion of Princes and was sanctioned by a civil establishment. Being now professed without sincerity and without humility ; its precepts soon lost their influence, and every corruption of Christian piety followed, which might be expected from interested passions, from a confusion of sacred and profane learning, and from
all

all those peculiar circumstances of foreign invasion, savage customs, and savage ignorance, which ensued. In such times when superstition would be sure to acquire, with accumulated force, all the influence which true Religion lost, it could not be difficult for religious pretensions of the most absurd and blasphemous kind to erect themselves in the place of pure Christianity. It pleased God, however, that the power of this kind, which was erected in the See of Rome, was made to conduce to some good purposes. The Church of Rome was known to deliver down the regular profession of Christianity from the beginning. It maintained likewise without interruption the discriminating doctrines of our Religion with regard to the Godhead and our Redeemer: and, what was of invaluable consequence, it delivered down to us the Scriptures; and we are assured that it did not corrupt them, as well from positive proofs of their integrity, as from the danger, to which it would have been exposed, of having its corruptions detected by the members of a rival Communion, which was established in the East under the Bishops of Constantinople. It pleased God also that one of the consequences of the rivalry of these Communions was the encouragement of learning in ecclesiastical bodies; and that, notwithstanding

withstanding the unfavourable situation of our Religion, its external enemies were not able to prevail against the public establishment of it in the Kingdoms of Western Europe. With these advantages, which were left us after all the corruption of the darker Ages, we have been enabled under the revival of sound learning, under the incitement of a foreign reformation, and under the peculiar circumstances of our own civil government, to correct our religious errors and to establish that system of Christianity among us, which has been the principal subject of the present discourse.

We have, therefore, as Christians, as Protestants, and as members of our own national Church, abundant means to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us, as far as this hope is connected with the manner, in which our holy Religion has been received and conveyed through successive ages down to our own times.

Let us, however, not be vain of distinctions in any of these respects between ourselves and our Christian brethren, who dissent from us, or who are members of other establishments. Let us rather direct our thoughts to the consideration of those arguments and those objections relative to the general truth of the Religion

gion thus delivered down to us, in which Christians of all denominations are equally concerned. If the conviction, which ought to result from these more important considerations, were to produce its proper effect; we should all rejoice with exceeding great joy that the Almighty has been pleased to confer on mankind such an invaluable blessing, as Christianity. Actuated by the same common belief of the great doctrines of our Religion, we should charitably and cheerfully bear with the various infirmities of each other; while we looked forward with awful expectation to that time, when we must all stand before the judgement-seat of our great Redeemer and receive our reward, under his merits, according to the use, which we have made, of those particular means of knowing and acting which he has vouchsafed to afford us.

S E R M O N V.

1 P E T. III. 15.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man, that asketh you a reason of the Hope that is in you.

IN the preceding discourses I have stated regularly the substance of our Religion from its earliest declarations in the different parts of Scripture to its complete publication after the resurrection of Christ; I have also given in them a sketch of its history from that publication of it to the present times; I am now, therefore, in the next place, to state in a summary manner the arguments, adducible in proof of the truth of our Religion, and consequently in vindication of the answer which may be given from thence concerning the Hope that is in us.

So numerous and so various, however, are the arguments, by which the truth of our holy Religion may be proved, that to comprehend

within a small compass a regular compendium of the whole, or even of the more important part of them, is impossible. It must suffice, therefore, in the present and the following discourse (which I shall appropriate to this part of my subject) if I attempt to state compendiously such among the more important of these arguments; as, commencing with the being and attributes of God, are sufficient regularly to prove the credibility of a divine Revelation, and to shew that Christianity by its internal and external evidences evinces itself to be in reality such a Revelation.

The being of God is an article of Faith, on which all Religion, both natural and revealed, immediately and necessarily depends. He, that comes to God, must believe that he is. But, this fundamental article is not more necessary, than its proof is easy. The observation, which is made in common life, that whatever is most indispensably wanted is always most easily acquired, obtains here in an eminent degree. The being of God is proved from every object within the extent of our observation; and in a manner so singularly satisfactory, that men of warmth and ability have not scrupled to affirm ^a “that it is the only thing of which

^a Though we cannot strictly admit the truth of this sentiment, which is adopted in No. 69 of the Guardian, and repeated in

“ we are certain.” Every particle of matter, even by its passiveness and inactivity, proclaims some external cause of its existence. And human reason, a principle the most remote of any in this world from matter, however arrogant and presumptuous, dares not profess itself its own original. Besides, not only does every object, with which we are conversant, whether material or spiritual, require in order to its production the agency of some cause without itself; but, as this cause also must either be the effect of some other cause or be self-existent, we shall, if we pursue the argument, at length necessarily ascend to a great and super-eminent cause, which is the effect of nothing and is consequently a self-existent being.

To suppose, in opposition to this, that things might be produced “ ad infinitum,” successively depending on each other, is evidently to suppose them to exist without any original cause. A supposition, not less absurd, than that which would require of us to admit that any individual production might exist without its own proper and immediate cause. It

No. 381 of the Spectator, by Mr. Addison; yet we may fully and safely subscribe to the inferences of Bp. Stillingfleet, who makes the foundation of all certainty to depend on the necessary existence of a being absolutely perfect. For without that, says he, we can never be sure that our faculties are not so constituted, as to deceive us. Orig. Sac. p. 230.

answers, indeed, some purpose: it removes the absurdity to a distance, and renders it perhaps invisible to the unpenetrating eye. But surely it is not more absurd (as hath been often alleged) to suppose that one link of a chain may remain suspended in the air without support, than to contend that an infinite number of links may be thus suspended without any prop to sustain the whole. It is in vain also that Atheism has urged "that, though individual things cannot, yet the Universe being "a " sui generis phenomenon " may, perhaps, " exist without a cause." This supposition is very nearly allied to the former, and equally absurd with it. Doubtless, it ought never to have been brought forward by the men, who are most zealous to repeat it; since it is contrary to our universal ^b experience, and thus is impressed with that characteristic, which they themselves are ready on all occasions to urge, as decisive against Revelation. To prove, however, the absurdity both of this and the former supposition, I need only insist that each of them sets itself in direct opposition to that universally received maxim, " Nihil est in toto,

^b Besides, no probable reason can be assigned for the deviation from universal experience here supposed; whereas the contrary is true with regard to the parts of Revelation which are opposed on this ground; as may at once be seen in the instances of this kind mentioned in the following note.

“ quod

“quod non fuit prius in partibus.” But, in fact, Atheism, thus supported, depends solely upon its own assertion: and this, which is the case with it in the instances at present before us, is equally so in all ^c others. It has been justly ^d remarked that “the whole strength of
“Atheism consists in contradicting the univer-
“sal reason of mankind: that Atheists have
“no principle and can have none; and, there-
“fore, that they can never reason, but only
“confidently deny, or affirm”.

By the original Cause, however, whose self-existence is thus evinced, I do not mean one who gave existence to himself: that would make action antecedent to existence: but one,

^c This dependence on assertion is evident in all those trite assumptions in favour of Atheism, which are repeated in Mr. Hume's Dialogues: p. 55—70, 94, 115, 125, 130, 166, 189, 196, 215, 238 &c. It is eminently the case also with the objections advanced by him against miracles, and the proofs of the being and attributes of God which are drawn from thence. These objections rest for their principal support upon this single circumstance, “that such miracles are contrary to experience.” — See his essay on miracles.—They rest, therefore, upon this assumption, “that God, who is the freest of all possible agents, must, if he have once acted in an extraordinary manner, go on to act so; even when, perhaps, the reasons for such extraordinary agency have entirely ceased.”

Mr. Hume is so fond of this gratuitous reasoning (if I may so call it) from our want of experience; that he not only uses it to disprove the truth of miracles, but also in his dialogues (p. 130) to raise doubts concerning the being of God; and in his Essay on the immortality of the soul (p. 38) to establish its mortality.

^d See Sherlock on Providence, p. 15. 12mo. Ed. 1776.

who

who emphatically “hath existence in himself,” or whose inherent and necessary attribute it is “to exist”. That this great Cause also cannot be a material substance is evident; since he must be both an active, and an intelligent Principle. Without activity nothing can be produced; and, without intelligence, nothing which carries with it design and final intention. He must, therefore, be possessed of a spiritual being: and, by whatever name he may sometimes be called, he must ever be described as an immaterial or spiritual substance.

It must be confessed, indeed, that the ideas which we can form for ourselves, of this self-existent Spirit, or of God, as we commonly call him, are exceedingly defective: but, this by no means evinces that we are not absolutely certain that there is such a Spirit. There is an immense difference between the proof of his existence, and the investigation of the nature under which he exists. With regard to the former the lowest and most imperfect of rational creatures may abundantly satisfy himself: but the latter cannot be attained by the highest: no creature can ever be supposed capable of discovering the essence of a self-existent Creator. That among those, who have denied the existence of God, some have confessedly been men of science, detracts not in the

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the smallest degree from the certainty of his existence. It is an old observation, that "nothing is so absurd, but that some philosopher has asserted it." There have been philosophers in our own age, who have endeavoured ^e at the same time to disprove the existence of both matter and spirit: and who, as far as their principles go, have disowned the testimony of all their senses. Besides, it is well known that perverseness and affectation of singularity often make men of various descriptions bold enough to advance and maintain opinions, which their own reason secretly disavows.

As proofs of the being of God are deducible from the works of the creation; so likewise are proofs of his attributes. The power and wisdom, which are every where displayed in the different parts of creation, prove him to be possessed in such an infinite degree of the natural perfections, which are commonly ascribed to him; and the final intention, discoverable in them, enables us to conclude likewise so irresistibly in proof of his moral, as well as his natural attributes; that we need only open our eyes and inquire into the things

^e Nihil tam absurdum est quod non dixerit aliquis philosophorum. Cic. de Nat. Deorum.

^f See Hume's Treatise of human nature, or what is said of it in Beattie's Essay on Truth, p. 258, &c.

around us to be convinced of his infinite and universal perfection. Indeed, mankind of every country and every age appear to have been so fully convinced both of the existence and perfection of God; that, if this conviction be not allowed to have arisen from traditions or impressions derived from himself, and, in either case, decisive in our favour; it must have arisen from the works of creation, and must add irresistible weight to such arguments as those which have been above stated.

It is unnecessary, therefore, for me to dwell longer on this part of my subject, and to encounter the danger of weakening or of obscuring the plain and unanswerable inferences in proof of the being and attributes of God, which are deducible from the works of creation, by metaphysical and disputable reasonings

§ “ Ut porro firmissimum hoc afferri videtur cur deos esse credamus, quod nulla gens tam fera, nemo omnium tam sit immanis, cujus mentem non imbuit deorum opinio. Multi de diis prava sentiunt: id enim vitioso more effici solet: omnes tamen esse vim et naturam divinam arbitrantur. Nec vero id collocutio hominum aut consensus efficit: non institutis opinio est confirmata, non legibus. Omni autem in re consensus omnium gentium lex naturæ putanda est.

Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. i. c. 13.

Mr. Hume says in the 2d Vol. of his Essays, p. 429: “ The only point of Theology in which we shall find a consent of mankind almost universal is that there is an invisible intelligent power in the world.”

h Archbishop Secker's Lecture on this subject is well worthy of our perusal. See Lect. 6th.

a priori.

a priori. Especially too, as the ¹enemies of our Religion in the present age generally consult their own character so far, as to admit these truths and even to magnify their extraordinary and unquestionable evidence ; thinking, perhaps, to acquire from thence the appearance of candour at least and impartiality, if not of piety.

Now that this all-perfect Creator should form the world, which we inhabit, without some

¹ Mr. Hume commences the general corollary at the conclusion of his *Essays* (Vol. II. p. 482.) with these words : “ Though the stupidity of men barbarous and uninstructed be so great that they may not see a sovereign author in the more obvious works of nature, to which they are so much familiarized ; yet it scarce seems possible that any one of good understanding should reject the idea, when once it is suggested to him. A purpose, an intention, a design is evident in every thing ; and when our comprehension is so far enlarged as to contemplate the first rise of this visible system, we must adopt with the strongest conviction the idea of some intelligent cause, or author.” And again, (p. 484) “ What a noble privilege is it of human nature to attain the knowledge of the supreme being, and from the visible works of nature to be enabled to infer so sublime a principle as its supreme Creator ? ”

Even after Mr. Hume appears in his dialogues on natural Religion to have endeavoured to weaken, if not to subvert, our belief in the existence of an infinitely perfect Creator and governour of the universe by a repetition of all the gratuitous assumptions of Atheism, he makes his principal speaker profess : (p. 228) “ that no one has a deeper sense of Religion impressed upon his mind, or pays more profound adoration to the divine being as he discovers himself to reason in the inexplicable contrivance and artifice of nature. A purpose, an intention, a design strikes every where the most careless, the most stupid, thinker, and no man can be so hardened in absurd systems as at all times to reject it.”

proposed

proposed end is a most unreasonable, and a blasphemous supposition. Every particle of matter, with which we are conversant, is found to be calculated for some useful purpose : and can we conceive of the whole less suitably to the perfection of its wonderful Author? Infinite power and goodness never exert themselves, but under the direction of infinite wisdom. And, therefore, each of these attributes must cooperate with the others in every work of Providence. The world, then, which we inhabit, must have been created for some purpose, as worthy of infinite wisdom, as its formation was of infinite power and goodness. And if it was, what can this purpose be? Doubtless, not that all the different parts of it should rise, flourish, decay, and perish, in the fleeting order in which we see them daily pass before our eyes. There is nothing (as far as we can perceive) in a successive rotation of corruptible matter, capable, on its own account, of pleasing an eternal and immutable Creator. Nor does the moral world, as it stands at present, offer to our contemplation any thing worthy of so great an Author. A confused scene of intemperance, injustice, and irreligion cannot please his eyes, which are too pure to behold iniquity. It must argue a thorough ignorance of mankind, or very unworthy notions
of

of the Deity to suppose that he could possibly create a race of beings merely to act on a fleeting stage the inconsistent and flagitious characters, which are ^k commonly displayed in human life, and then to vanish for ever. Indeed, it exceeds the highest powers of man's wisdom to account for the introduction and permission of moral evil; much less can it reconcile this evil with the designation of an all-perfect Creator. Besides, whence can it arise that the Deity beholds oppressed virtue and triumphant vice, and lets them pass at present unnoticed by his Omnipotence? For, though it be allowed that the actions of the best men are so imperfect, as not to merit any reward; yet there is an essential difference in the conduct of different men, which requires at the hands of an all-perfect Governour a proportionable difference in their allotment of happiness. The same reason, therefore, which assures us of the being and attributes of God, assures also that he must have created the world at first, and now ^l preserve it in existence, for some other

^k Thucydides, while he fully and admirably describes the iniquity and profligacy of every kind, which broke forth in the Peloponnesian war, says very justly of these evils: "γενομενοι μιν και αι εις οσομενοι εως αυ η αυτη φυσικη ανθρωπων η."

Duker's Edit. L. iii. c. 82. p. 217.

^l That the Preserver is the same with the Creator of the world is a truth of natural Religion, which may safely be taken for granted. For, whether the Preservation of it be ascribed to qualities,

purpose, than what appears to receive its accomplishment in this life.

To attempt to determine by the light of nature what this purpose must be, is neither an indication of a weak, nor of a presumptuous mind. For, though the original circumstances, and therefore most undoubtedly the original design, of man's creation can never be known, except by means of supernatural Revelation; yet the design of his existence, under the circumstances in which we now see him, may be proved, from the ^m promiscuous distribution of good and evil in this life, to be no other than to make it preparatory to some future state of recompense. For, however consistent any contrary supposition may be with the other attributes of God, this alone will at the same time vindicate his infinite goodness, and justice in the moral government of the world.

And if to consecrate (as it were) this unhallowed mass to a purpose worthy of its great Author, and to vindicate at the same time the

qualities, impressed upon it originally or at subsequent times; the effect must ultimately be ascribed in either case to the same great Creator: and, as he is perfect in fore-knowledge no less than in power, the effect must also in either case be itself precisely the same.

^m This argument constantly recurs in Bishop Sherlock's admirable sermons.

retributive

retributive perfections of God, some state of rewards and punishments must be designed hereafter for the human race; doubtless, we may expect to be informed of an event, in which we are so essentially concerned, and of the means requisite to convert it to our future happiness. To this end, indeed, our reason, in addition to what has been above stated, may suggest arguments drawn from the nature of the human soul and from various other sources; and may urge, as proofs of the information concerning a future state afforded by such arguments, the hopes of reward and the fears of punishment after death, which ⁿ every where indicate in the minds of men the strongest persuasion of a future judgement. It may direct us also to virtue, as the only means of securing our acceptance with God at that solemn period. But, — if the Religion recommended by human reason (or natural Religion, as it is called,) can afford us no information with regard to the circumstances either of our original or our future state, no means to discover and enforce a regular code of human duty, and no assurance that man's best, because imperfect, endeavours will at last be accepted by God; — if, also, it admits not of those external and divine proofs of its truth,

ⁿ See Robertson's Hist. of Amer. Vol. II. p. 202. 8vo. Ed. And Secker's Lect. 12mo, p. 133.

which,

which, though reprobated by ° modern unbelievers when urged in favour of Christianity, have † universally of old been deemed essential to Religion, and have ever had the most decisive influence on the minds of men; — and if, besides, it is confined to the wise and the great; who will think so unsatisfactory and partial a guide the best, which ought to be expected by us in that which of all others is infinitely the most important of our concerns? And farther if, over and above all that has hitherto been said, or, indeed, that can be said of the same kind, we suppose that since human reason was first given for man's direction his understanding has been darkened and his will corrupted by some great deviation from his original uprightness; we shall at once account for the subsequent deficiency of natural Religion, and be justified in entertaining ardent, though humble, hopes, that the Deity would be pleased to communicate to us from himself some ‡ Revelation on this most important sub-

° See what Mr. Hume says on this subject in his Essay on miracles: and see also the very able reply made to him in the text and notes of Dr. White's seventh Bampton-Lecture Sermon.

† This appears from the attempts made by different Heathen legislators to give sanction to their religious systems by pretended prophecies and miracles.

‡ Mr. Hume himself declares at the conclusion of the religious doubts dispersed through his dialogues: "That the most natural sentiment, which a well disposed mind will feel with regard

ject, adapted to our ignorance, and infirmities.

Now, that such a Revelation has actually been communicated, those very Heathen nations, from which the insufficiency of natural Religion is inferred, may serve to prove. Almost every one of them has at some time or other aspired to the importance of having been thus highly favoured by the Deity. And, however, from the number of these false pretensions, the real Revelation may appear to lose of its credit; yet these serve rather to prove the truth of some one, than to prejudice the general cause: since, wherever we meet with a counterfeit, we naturally conclude that there was an original. Besides, there is no danger of not being able to distinguish between them, when compared together. For, that no Revelation, except the Christian (of which the

“ regard to the first Cause is a longing desire and expectation
 “ that Heaven would be pleased to dissipate, at least alleviate,
 “ this profound ignorance by affording some more particular
 “ Revelation to mankind and making discoveries of the nature
 “ attributes and operations of the divine object of our Faith.”

Dialogues on Nat. Rel. p. 263.

† In Valerius Maximus—capite 2do.—de simulata religione, among the pretenders to a divine Revelation, are mentioned Numa Pompilius, Minos, Pisistratus, Lycurgus, Zaleucus—&c.

‡ If the pretensions to a divine Revelation among the Heathens are not to be ascribed to their acquaintance with the writings of Moses; they must have originated from traditions concerning the Revelations communicated to Noah and the Patriarchs. See Cave's primitive Christianity, Vol. I. p. 23, 24.

Jewish is the commencement), has the marks, requisite to authenticate a divine commission, has been often proved; and it is, indeed, a truth which modern unbelievers readily admit. They contend that all alike want this recommendation.

But, if it can be proved, that Christianity carries with it a remedy for the deficiencies, above pointed out in natural Religion; if it can be proved,—First, that Christianity is calculated to lead mankind to future happiness by the complete knowlege, which it conveys to them of themselves, of their duty and its obligation, and of their attainable acceptance with God;—Secondly, that it was accompanied with external and divine attestations of its truth;—and Thirdly, that it is distinguished by its universality;—if these three articles can be proved with regard to Christianity, then greater assurances of its truth ought not to be required, since greater cannot be given: both the internal and external evidences of our Religion will evince it to be a divine Revelation; both the moral and natural attributes of God will vouch for its truth.

To prove the first of these three articles we need only have recourse to those books, in which the doctrines of our Religion are contained. We shall there find such information
given

given concerning mankind, such rules laid down for their direction, and such provision made for their happiness; as must abundantly supply all their deficiencies of knowledge in these important respects: and such, as their own wisdom in its deepest researches could never shadow out.

Without any parade of philosophy, without any deductions from fallible reasoning, 'the creation of man, his trial, disobedience, and corruption are unfolded in the holy Scriptures with the most instructive plainness. In the same Scriptures also, and with the same unadorned excellence, the intention of his present existence, and the general circumstances of that state, in which he is to exist hereafter, are awfully impressed upon us. Such intuitive knowledge (if I may so call it) is disclosed concerning all that relates to mankind, as Omniscience alone could possess: and such unaffected simplicity is displayed in the narration, as belongs to him only, who is uninfluenced by the little vanities of finite wisdom.

Nor does any less manifestation of the same divine excellencies characterize, and qualify for general use, those dictates of our Religion, which are calculated to reform the human mind by directing it properly with regard to

* See the first Sermon.

its duty. To discover a few truths amidst a variety of errors appears to have been the utmost proficiency of reason: and a single wise saying, notwithstanding a thousand inconsistencies and contradictions, has been enough to constitute a philosopher. But in Christ Jesus there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. In his instructions all is alike the result of unerring excellence. Being possessed of all the ^c treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and being, moreover, himself the great example proposed for the imitation of mankind, he neither drew his instructions from any disputable reasonings, nor from any ostentatious display of virtue in others; but, from his own universal perfection. Knowing whence those things proceed which defile a man, he made not human duty to depend upon outward appearances; but prepared for it a solid foundation in ^w internal purity, and a reward essentially different from every human motive: * “Blessed, says he, are “the pure in heart for they shall see God”. A reward, to which enlightened reason must ever look forward, as to the highest perfection of created beings: but, which was to be proposed by him only who came forth from the bosom of God. Accordingly, that internal

^c Col. ii. 3.

^w Matt. xv. 10—20. Luke vi. 45.

* Matt. v. 8.

purity, which immediately leads to the perfection of man's duty with regard to himself, is explicitly enjoined him and is made also the foundation of his duty with regard to his neighbour and his God. Our great Redeemer and Lawgiver was not content merely to regulate the actions of mankind towards each other. * Every selfish, arrogant, and revengeful passion, for which either civil policy or vicious custom had procured a sanction, was added to the Christian catalogue of sins. It is from these tumultuous impulses, as experience convinces us, that all our vices and misery arise. But these the light of nature had not penetration or courage enough openly to arraign. While, therefore, the cause remained in full force, it ought not to surprise us that the effect was not diminished. In their room Christianity commands us to substitute † universal love, humbleness, and forgiveness of injuries; as dispositions best suited to our own infirmities, and most acceptable in his sight, “ who bringeth down the mighty from their seat and exalteth the humble and meek.” Such inward virtues, unknown or untaught by natural Religion, Christianity lays down as the foundation of

† Matt. xv. 18, 19. James iii. 17.

‡ Matt. v. 22, &c. † John iii. 15.

* Luke vi. 27, &c.

happiness to the human soul; and commands us to practise them universally. It commands us to learn of him, who was ^b meek and lowly in heart, and we shall find rest to our souls. It commands us, after his great example, to extend our benevolence to all mankind; to ^c love even our enemies; to bless those, that curse us; to do good to such, as hate us; and to pray for those, who despitefully use and persecute us: teaching us by a new commandment that the great causes of doing ill to others were to be supplanted by a principle of unlimited benevolence; and that all injurious distinctions of different countries, interests, and affections, were to be done away by extended and universal charity. The unlearned son of a carpenter (as his countrymen insultingly stiled him) not only at once lays a solid foundation for the most perfect system of morality: but, a Jew (selfish as the Jews were esteemed) is the first to teach the philanthropists of the Heathen world lessons of universal love. Reason, indeed, may now assure us that no other principle can make men happy here, or qualify them to enjoy their own and each other's happiness hereafter. But, God is love, and the original propagation of this doctrine proceeded from him alone. To specify all the great and

^b Matt. xi. 29.^c Matt. v. 44.

particular

particular duties with regard to ^d God and his service, no less than with regard to man, which are enjoined as effects of the purification of our hearts; the occasions, on which they are inculcated; the exactness with which they are proportioned to our ^eabilities; and the condescension, with which they are impressed upon the understandings of the ^f poor and ignorant, would perhaps at present rather confound than inform the mind, and call off its attention from the wonderful simplicity, with which they are all made to center in a few rules of easy recollection and universal application. The Christian's religious duties are all summed up in that sincere love of God; which originates in internal purity, displays itself towards him in Faith and devotion, and is exerted with ^gall our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength. And with regard to our neighbour we are enjoined, by an appeal to our own inmost desires, to ^hlove him as ourselves. On these two commands ⁱhung all the law and the prophets: and on these the Christian's duties are expressly made to depend.

^d John iv. 24—James iv. 8.

^e Luke xxi. 3.

^f See the whole of our Saviour's Sermon on the mount.

^g Luke x. 27.

^h Matt. xxii. 39.

ⁱ Matt. xxii. 40.

And

And as the Gospel-rules of human duty were not the result of any disputable reasonings; so likewise the obligation, by which they are enforced, is not exposed to the vain cavils of man's wisdom. The observation of them was not recommended from the fitness of things, that eternal subject of dispute among philosophers. Consistent with whatever can properly be conceived to constitute the fixed and unalterable laws of virtue and vice, they are, notwithstanding, ^k enjoined as the commands of an all-perfect God; and are to be ^l obeyed by us for his sake, and with a view to his glory: a Motive, which sanctifies our whole conduct, and at the same time extends its influence to our inmost souls, bringing under the cognizance of Omniscience those secret thoughts, which are the sources of all our actions, and which it is the great design of the Christian law universally to purify and direct to that supreme being, who is to be their first, their principal, and their unceasing object.

^k "Thus saith the Lord" is the authority, under which the writers of the Old Testament delivered their instructions. In the New Testament also our blessed Saviour either speaks authoritatively in his own name, as in Matt. v. and other parts of his sermon on the Mount, see Matt. vii. 29; or in the name of the Father, on the doing of whose will our salvation is explicitly made to depend: see John v. 43, and Matt. vii. 21.

^l 1 John iii. 17. 1 Cor. x. 31.

And

And while the terrors of almighty and eternal vengeance are denounced in the most explicit language against obstinate Irreligion; such ^m rewards are insured in a future state to sincere, though imperfect, obedience, as the heart of the wisest and best man cannot adequately conceive. And if there be any one circumstance in Christianity beyond all others, which requires our grateful admiration of the divine goodness; it shines forth in the provision made by this holy Religion for the future, and eternal happiness of mankind, and in the assurance, which it conveys to us of our attainable acceptance with God. Human reason (as I have endeavoured to show) may adduce irrefragable arguments in proof of the Being and Perfection of God, and of the certainty of a future state: but, it can afford us no satisfaction concerning the means, by which fallen and, notwithstanding their best endeavours, sinful creatures can be rendered so pleasing in the sight of an all-holy Judge, as to be accepted by him and made heirs of eternal life. Our satisfaction in this important respect must be entirely derived from the Christian Revelation. Under Christianity the same all-perfect Redeemer, who has vouchsafed to direct us in the fullest manner with regard to our

^m 1 Cor. ii. 9.

duty, has ^a vouchsafed also to provide a counterpoise to all the temptations of our spiritual enemies in the influence of the Holy Ghost, and a refuge for our imperfections in his own merits. Through his all-powerful atonement and intercession we are thus both assisted in the performance of our duty, and at all times assured of acceptance and eternal happiness with our offended God upon that sincere repentance and faith, which necessarily carry with them a reformation of life. Our reason may admire; but it has no powers of its own either to investigate, or to confirm, such an amazing proof of the riches of the goodness of God. Infidels too may scoff at their Redemption, and in their own persons evince how unworthy man may be of such transcendent mercy: but the more they deride this act of mercy, the more fully do they prove, that what so far exceeds man's reason could never have originated in his invention. Of the same perfect kind, however, with this instance of divine mercy are all the other Scriptural representations of the divine attributes. And, though unbelief and the deceitfulness of sin may harden men's hearts; yet they, who come to the perusal of the holy Scriptures with the ordinary feelings of humanity, will find,

^a See the first Sermon.

among the means used by the inspired writers to instruct and reform mankind, such endearing evidence of God's goodness, such alarming instances of his justice, and descriptions of him, in every respect so corroborative of the most perfect ideas which we can form for ourselves of the Divine Being and so transcendently superior to them, as, from a mixture of pleasure, awe, and reverence, cannot fail to convey to the mind a most satisfactory proof of the divine origin of Christianity; and such as cannot fail at the same time to convince every candid inquirer, that there is nothing either in the mercy or in the judgement, discoverable in the Scripture-account of the atonement made for man's transgression, which does not entirely coincide with that idea of the all-perfect God, which Revelation so variously and so consistently supports.

That this description of the internal constitution of our Religion is not exaggerated, the conversion of ° unbelievers into zealous defenders of Christianity from the sole force of its internal evidences may serve to prove. From other unbelievers, less capable of conviction and who had perhaps less impartially weighed the subject, the same evidences have extorted confessions, which reflect as much disgrace on

° See Soame Jenyns's internal evidences.

their

their own unbelief, as credit on our holy Religion. “ I will confess ” (says a celebrated^p foreigner in his treatise on education) “ that
 “ the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me
 “ with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel
 “ hath its influence on my heart. Peruse the
 “ works of the philosophers with all their
 “ pomp of diction, how mean, how contempt-
 “ ible are they, compared with the Scriptures?
 “ Is it possible that a book at once so simple
 “ and so sublime should be merely the work
 “ of man?—It is more inconceivable that a
 “ number of persons should agree together to
 “ write such a book, than that one only should
 “ furnish the subject of it. The Jews were
 “ incapable of the diction and strangers to the
 “ morality contained in the Gospel: the proofs
 “ of whose truth are so striking and inimitable
 “ that the inventor would be a much more
 “ ^qastonishing character, than the hero.”
 What stronger proof can we have of the in-
 consistency of man’s wisdom, and of the im-

^p Rousseau in his *Emilius*, Vol. III. p. 136, and 139. Engl. Edit. 1767.

^q Rousseau here ascribes that very characteristic to the internal evidences of our Religion, without being convinced of its divine origin, which Hume says would command his Faith in its miracles: “ if, says the latter, the falshood of the testimony would
 “ be more miraculous, than the event which it relates; then,
 “ and not till then, can it pretend to command my Faith.”
Essays Vol. II. p. 130.

possibility.

possibility of converting a self-sufficient philosopher, than such declarations from a professed unbeliever? Who would not rather expect that a Religion, which contains within itself such unquestionable evidence of its divine origin, should not have any one learned adversary, than that the author himself of the above declarations should be of that number?

We have seen, then, that Christianity was calculated to lead mankind to future happiness by the complete knowledge, which it conveys to them of themselves, of their duty and its obligation, and of their attainable acceptance with God. In the next discourse I shall proceed to the consideration of the two remaining articles by which I was to prove that our Religion is a divine Revelation.

S E R M O N VI.

1 P E T. III. 15.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man, that asketh you a reason of the Hope that is in you.

IN speaking concerning the arguments adducible in proof of the truth of our Religion, and consequently concerning the answer, which we may give from thence with regard to the Hope that is in us, I was to content myself with attempting to state compendiously, in the two discourses appropriated to this part of my subject, such among the more important of them, as commencing with the being and attributes of God are sufficient regularly to prove the credibility of a divine Revelation, and to show that Christianity by its internal and external evidences evinces itself to be in reality such a Revelation. Accordingly, in the first of these discourses, having finished what relates to the being and attributes of God and the credibility
of

of a divine Revelation, I proposed to prove that Christianity is such a Revelation by showing that it carries with it a remedy for those deficiencies in natural Religion, which served to establish the general credibility of a divine Revelation; namely, by showing—**First**, that Christianity is calculated to lead mankind to future happiness by the complete knowledge, which it conveys to them of themselves, of their duty and its obligation, and of their attainable acceptance with God;—**Secondly**, that it was accompanied with external and divine attestations of its truth;—and **Thirdly**, that it is distinguished by its universality: and having proposed this, I at the same time went through the first of these articles. I shall now, therefore, proceed to the two remaining articles: and when I have shown that Christianity was accompanied with external and divine attestations of its truth, and also that it is distinguished by its universality, I shall finish this head with the conclusion, which naturally follows from the different parts of it, and with a few suitable observations,

The external and divine attestations, to be expected in confirmation of a divine Revelation, can be no greater, perhaps no other, than prophecies and miracles. In the display of these the attributes of Omniscience and Omnipotence are exerted.

With

With regard to the prophecies, recorded in the Scriptures, they respect contingencies too wonderful for the powers of man to conjecture, or to effect. Many of those, which are found in the Old Testament, foretold unexpected changes in the distribution of earthly power. And whether they foretold the fall of flourishing cities, or the ruin of mighty empires; the ^a event has minutely corresponded with the prediction. Nor were they delivered with that latitude of expression, which characterized, and sheltered from detection, the impositions of Heathen oracles. Some of them on the contrary were so particular, and so remarkably pointed to their object; that Porphyry, by a new method of assailing Revelation, set himself to prove the literal accomplishment of Daniel's prophecies; and from their circumstantial minuteness boldly inferred that they must be the forgery of some ^b later age, in opposition to all the demonstrative proofs of their antecedent existence. So differently did Porphyry think of Scripture-prophecy from the modern historian, who sarcastically attempts to discredit the evidences of our Religion by

^a See Bishop Newton on the prophecies.

^b See Grotius de Veritate Christ. Rel. l. i. c. 17. — Prideaux's Connections, Vol. 1. p. 128. Fol. and Lardner's Jewish and Christian testimonies, Vol. III. p. 133, &c.—4to Ed.

calling a prediction of later times “ a rare prediction, because the style was unambiguous and the date unquestionable.”

But, the great object of the prophecies of the Old Testament is the Redemption of mankind. This, as soon as Adam's fall had made it necessary, the mercy of God was pleased to foretell. And, as the time for its accomplishment drew nearer, the predictions concerning it became gradually so clear and determinate, as to mark out with historical precision almost every ^d circumstance in the life and character of infinitely the most extraordinary Personage, that ever appeared among men. Any one of these predictions is sufficient to indicate a prescience more than human. But the collective force of all taken together is such, that nothing more can be necessary to prove the interposition of Omniscience, than the establishment of their authenticity. And this, even at so remote a period as the present, is placed beyond all doubt. The books, in which they are contained, are known to have been translated into different languages and dispersed into different parts, long before the coming of Christ. It is absurd, therefore, to suppose that any forgery with regard to them,

^c Gibbon's History, Vol. V. p. 570.

^d See the first Sermon.

if attempted by the first Christians, should not have been immediately detected : and still more absurd, if possible, to suppose that any passages thus forged should afterwards have been admitted universally into their Scriptures by the Jews themselves, who, from the first application of these prophecies to our blessed Saviour, have endeavoured by every * method to pervert their meaning. Surely, had the prophecies in question not been found at that time in the writings, to which the first propagators of Christianity appealed; the Jews needed only produce those writings to refute the imposition : and since no refutation of this kind was then attempted, it was a demonstration to the men of that age; and the same prophecies, being universally found there now without the possibility of accounting for it if they were forged, convey in all reason as forcible a demonstration to ourselves at present ; that they were written there from the beginning, and unquestionably

* Among other methods they have even dared to mutilate and corrupt various passages of their own Scriptures. Of these I may mention Zach. xii. 10. and Ps. xxii. 16 : in the first of which passages Jehovah says in Zachariah, " they shall look upon me whom they have pierced," and in the last the Psalmist says in the person of the Messiah, " they pierced my Hands and my feet ;" and both have been altered by the Jews since the application of them to our blessed Saviour. See on this subject, and on the sixteen other places which were altered by the Scribes, Pearson on the Creed p; 201. 5th Edit.

by no other than the finger of God.

Nor are the prophecies of the New Testament less evidently the inspiration of Omniscience. To say nothing of our blessed Saviour's predictions concerning himself and the propagation of his Religion, nor of those which relate to the future condition of the Church; the predictions, which respect the Jews, and which are common to the New as well as to the Old Testament, of which some have long since been accomplished and others are every day receiving their accomplishment before our eyes, abundantly prove the divine origin of the Gospel-prophecy. The destruction of Jerusalem with its unparalleled circumstances of horror is not more clearly recorded by Josephus, than it is foretold by Daniel and by our blessed Saviour. Nor did our blessed Saviour foretell only in the most ^f definite language the destruction of Jerusalem, and particularly that not one ^g stone of the Temple should be left upon another; he expressly foretold also that Jerusalem thus destroyed should be ^h trodden down of the Gentiles, till the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled: while the Jews themselves were to be carried away captive into all lands; and, according to the denunciation of their great lawgiver, were

^f Matt. xvi. 28.

^g Mark xiii. 2.

^h Luke xxi. 24.

to become an 'astonishment, a proverb, and a bye-word. Now that this has 'actually been the case with the Jews without intermission from the days of Titus and Adrian to the present time, every historian informs us : that it is so now, we see and know. Nor is this all. Whatever their own distinguished affection for their Religion and country could suggest, and whatever infidelity and hatred of Christianity could help forward in their favour, was in vain tried to defeat these prophecies. The apostate Julian, an emperor qualified for the attempt in riches, power, and blasphemous audaciousness, collects this vagabond people from all countries, and leads them on by his favourite Alypius to rebuild their temple. Every human power cooperates with them, every difficulty appears to have vanished. When on a sudden the work was broken up with terror and precipitation : and an enterprise, of which the execution was so zealously desired and so powerfully supported, was at once deserted. As the influence of human means was entirely engaged in its favour ; the miscarriage of it must be ascribed to supernatural interposition. What this was we are informed by ^k contemporary and other writers,

ⁱ Deut. xxviii. 37.

^k See in Whitby's general preface an enumeration of the early authors who have written on this subject, p. 28.

and particularly by Ammianus Marcellinus, whose testimony, as a Pagan, a philosopher, and a bosom-friend of the apostate Prince, infidelity would readily and fully admit, were it not before-hand apprised of its contents. He declares that ^m“ horrid balls of fire, breaking out near the foundation with frequent

Sozomen, after a particular relation of the miraculous defeat of Julian's attempt, says of this defeat, “ και τετο προς παντων αδειως λειπεται τε και πιστευεται, και παρ υδενος αμφιβαλλεται” Hist. Eccl. l. v. c. 22.

Mr. Moyle says on the subject, “ I am loth I confes to reject all the miracles since the days of the Apostles for the sake of a very remarkable one, which happened at the rebuilding of Jerusalem under Julian ; which is so extraordinary in all its circumstances and so fully attested by all the Christian and the Heathen historians of that age, that I do not see with what forehead any man can question the truth of it.”

Thundering Legion, Works, Vol. II p. 101. 8vo.

In the same manner, though Jortin doubts of the truth of all the other miracles, which are reported to have been performed after the commencement of the second century, he says of this ; “ The story of Julian's defeated attempt to rebuild the Jewish temple is, after every allowance has been made, as well attested as we could reasonably expect. The testimony of Christian writers on the subject being confined by Marcellinus, by Jewish writers, and perhaps by some passages in Julian's Epistles, and by this circumstance over and above, that it appeals to a fact which every one might go and see with his own eyes.”

Rem. on Eccl. Hist. Vol. III. p. 380.

But Bishop Warburton's full and learned defence of this miracle in his “ Julian” is well known, and is sufficient to supersede the necessity of any farther vindication of it.

¹ See Warburton's Julian, p. 46, 47.

^m Marcellinus's words on the occasion are “ metuendi globi flammaram, prope fundamenta crebris adsultibus erumpentes, fecere locum exustis aliquoties operantibus inaccessum, hocque modo, elemento destinatus repellente, cessavit incœptum.” L. xxiii. p. 412. Edit. 1588.

“ and

“ and reiterated attacks, rendered the place
“ from time to time inaccessible to the scorch-
“ ed and blasted workmen, and that the vic-
“ torious element continuing in this manner
“ obstinately bent, as it were, to repel their
“ attempts, the enterprise was given over.”
To oppose the very singular evidence, by
which this fact is recommended to our belief,
requires a more determined spirit of contra-
diction than is always to be ascribed to infide-
lity. Mr. Gibbon allows that “ the enter-
“ prise was defeated, perhaps, by a preterna-
“ tural event.”

But we cannot wonder if the evidence
on this occasion, which must be respected
even by our adversaries and which is al-
lowed at times to have some influence with
them, should, notwithstanding, not have a
full and converting influence on their hearts;
when we find that they are not to be converted
by the powerful arguments in favour of our
Religion, which arise from the present state of
the Jewish nation and which immediately apply
to their own senses. Who among our modern
unbelievers has not an opportunity of seeing
with his own eyes the wonderful completion
of the Scripture-prophecies with regard to the
Jews? Who among them may not with his

^a Gibbon's Hist. Vol. II. p. 388, 389.

own eyes see, in this people, a body of men, providentially preserved to this very day in a state of punishment and a state separation from all others; religious, yet deriving no blessing from God; peaceable, yet secure of no protection among men; despised and persecuted during seventeen hundred years as a nation, yet ever zealous of their national distinctions; abounding in riches, yet, contrary to the known influence of riches, destitute of a settled place where to enjoy them; and, as if they were expressly intended by the Almighty for the conversion of those who will not believe except they themselves see a sign from heaven, scattered over every country and obvious to the senses of every unbeliever?

The miracles, which are adducible in vindication of the divine origin of Christianity as well from the Old as the New Testament, and which constitute its other external and divine proof, were of such a nature as to preclude all possibility of forgery. Every individual in the Jewish nation was present at the time when the great miracles, recorded in the Pentateuch, were performed. Every one of them must have seen the wonders performed in Egypt; have seen the waters of the red Sea retire on either side, as on an heap, to afford them a passage; have heard the voice of
God

God from mount Sinai ; and sensibly have experienced the continued miracles wrought for ^o their sustenance and the preservation of their raiment during forty years in the wilderness. No one at that time could possibly deceive them in such matters. The connection, which these miracles had with their law, may serve also to prove that they were not thus deceived by any subsequent forgery. For, though we should for a moment suppose the whole Jewish nation to have been more absurdly credulous, than ever an individual was known to be in any other ; and that immediately upon the propagation of such a forgery they might admit at once the truth of these miracles (however unsupported by traditional history) ; yet surely they could not be so stupidly passive in the admission of a law, which was burthenfome and intolerable. Their own, as well as their fathers' experience must convict the impostor, who first enjoined the fictitious code as the ancient and divine constitution of their nation, and with it they would undoubtedly have rejected also the miracles, which were insidiously designed for its consecration. Besides, the Jews are repeatedly commanded in their law itself, “ ^p to teach the things therein contained

^o Deut. viii. 2, 3, 4.

^p Deut. vi. 7, 8, 9.

“ to their children; to talk of them when they
 “ sat in their houses, when they walked by the
 “ way; when they lay down, and when they
 “ rose up; to bind them for a sign upon their
 “ hand; to make them as frontlets between
 “ their eyes; to write them upon the posts of
 “ their houses and upon their gates.” These
 commands are immediately ⁹ calculated to pre-
 clude any imposition of later ages; and tend in
 conjunction with the preceding circumstances
 to demonstrate that neither the time, nor the
 manner, in which the law is said to have been
 delivered, was of man’s ⁷ invention. Indeed, the
 transactions recorded in the Pentateuch are re-
 ferred to by all the subsequent writers among
 the Jews in language, so simply and convin-
 cingly declarative of their divine truth; and
 the impression, which they made on the minds
 of the people, was so forcible; that no transac-
 tions appear to have been ever received by any
 nation with such universal and immoveable as-
 sent. Jeroboam and the other deserters of the
 Jewish worship before the ⁸ Babylonish capti-
 vity, and the sceptical Sadducees after it, dared
 not deny the truth of the Pentateuch. But;

⁹ See Jenkin’s Reasonableness of Christianity. Vol. I. c. 6.

⁷ See Shuckford’s Connection, Vol. III. p. 350—399.

⁸ This captivity was not extended to all the people of the
 Jews for any period of more than fifty years together.

in reality, the Jews were so far from being (what they were generally accounted by the Heathen world) the most credulous of all nations ; that they appear to have been the reverse. It cannot be matter of wonder that men, who had debased their natural notions of Religion by the most superstitious idolatry, should charge every worshipper of the invisible God with credulity. But if we consult the history of the Jews, where alone we can expect to meet with their true character ; we shall find them to have been the most stiff-necked people, and that from the beginning they always resisted the Holy Ghost. This obstinacy might, probably, be one reason why the miracles, calculated for the confirmation of their Religion, were performed in a manner so public and unexceptionable. But, certainly, we have at the same time to acknowledge another most gracious reason for the publick notoriety of the miracles, recorded both in the Pentateuch, and other parts of the Jewish Scriptures : since it has supplied succeeding ages with irrefragable arguments in vindication of the divine origin of our Religion.

† Particularly those performed by Joshua, Samuel, and Elijah ; and the continued miracle exhibited by the Cloud which rested over the Mercy-Seat in the old temple. See, concerning this cloud, Prideaux's Connection, Vol. I. p. 119. Fol. Edit.

Of the same incontrovertible notoriety also were the miracles of the New Testament. They were not done in a corner. Every one had full liberty to pry into their genuineness: and yet the most malicious enemies of our Saviour and his Apostles never pretended at the time of their performance to discover any imposition in them. Nor was the testimony of those, who afterwards stood forth to vouch for their truth less publick, or less unexceptionable, than the miracles themselves. Every martyr, among the first preachers of Christianity, demonstrates their reality by his death. For what, but the known truth of these wonderful events, made them lay down their lives for a Religion, of which these were an essential support; and often the immediate ^u cause of their own sufferings? That they were competent witnesses on the occasion, however poor and illiterate, their situation with respect to these miracles and the nature of the transactions themselves fully evince. These miracles were all objects of sense, and required no depth of learning or ingenuity for a proper observation of them. Of whatever abilities the observers were, they must know whether they had heard the dumb speak, had seen the blind

^u See the passage cited from Stillingfleet's Orig. Sac. in the notes, p. 41.

restored to fight, the lame walk, and the dead raised again to life : they must know whether their Lord's crucifixion, at which they were present, was attended with the miraculous circumstances which they relate ; and whether they were assured by their senses that he was again alive after his passion. We believe in these respects only what the disciples of Christ declare that ^v they had heard, had seen with their eyes, had looked on, and their hands had handled of the Word of life. Doubtless, men, who could hear, see, and feel, were as good witnesses in these matters of sense ; as the most learned and acute : and men, who laid down their lives in attestation of facts, thus indubitably known to them, cannot be suspected of any want of veracity on the occasion ; and must ever with candid enquirers ^w unexceptionably establish

^v 1 John i. 1.

^w The miracles of Christianity appear in reality to have all those requisites, which Mr. Hume says are not to be discovered in any miracle, found in history. He says " there is not to be found in all history any miracle attested by a sufficient number of men of such unquestionable good sense, education, and learning, as to secure us against all delusion in themselves ; of such undoubted integrity, as to place them beyond all suspicion of any design to deceive others ; of such credit and reputation in the eyes of mankind, as to have a great deal to lose in case of being detected in any falsehood ; and at the same time attesting facts performed in such a public manner and in so celebrated a part of the world, as to render the detection unavoidable. All which circumstances are requisite to give us full assurance in the testimony of men."

Essays, Vol. II. p. 130.

The education of St. Paul and the writings of him and of the
othc.

their truth. For, however it may be urged, that the truth of the Christian miracles is not proved by the sufferings of Christians for their faith under future persecutions ;—the sufferers might be deceived, and through well-meant zeal lay down their lives in defence of an error ;—however this may be urged ; yet it applies not in the smallest degree to the first teachers of Christianity, who attest on such occasions nothing but what fell within their own absolute and sensible knowlege.

But, the merciful God, who has left us irrefragable proofs of the authenticity of the prophecies, which respect our great Redeemer, in the unbelief of the Jews, has also supplied us with arguments in support of the miracles of our Religion from the different ways themselves in which they have been opposed by our adversaries. While the facts were too recent to be disputed * Celsus, Porphyry, and Hierocles admitted their reality, but denied the divine commission of the agent and the consequent truth of that Religion which they were wrought to establish. In modern times, when

other authors of the New Testament, their universally unimpeached characters, their unanimous surrender even of their lives in defence of the truth of the miracles which they relate, the notoriety of these miracles, and the conspicuous situation of Jerusalem and other places where they were wrought, all contribute to refute the assertions of this daring philosopher.

* See Mr. Moyle's Letters concerning the Thundering Legion, Works 8vo—Vol. II. p. 353.

the

the consequence of their admission is better known; and there are few, if any, who are not convinced that such credentials bespeak an ambassador sent from God (especially too when the purport of the embassy does not ⁷ contradict the great truths demonstrable by natural Religion,) unbelievers have prudently thought fit to shift their ground. But, unhappily for them, a denial of the Christian miracles at present comes too late: since the facts of this kind which infidelity has long since admitted upon earlier and better information, will for ever remain a testimony of the truth of Christianity and of the perverseness of modern unbelief.

The universality of our Religion, which forms a part both of its internal and external evidences, is the third and last article, by which I proposed to prove its divine origin.

⁷ See Stillingfleet's *Orig. Sacr.* l. ii. c. v. p. 172.

Let it not be thought that the argument here revolves at all in a circle, from internal to external evidences and vice versa. For, as Bishop Sherlock says, "Men do not distinguish between the doctrines, which we prove by miracles, and the doctrines by which we try miracles: for they are not the same doctrines. God never wrought miracles to prove the difference between good and evil: and I suppose that if any man were asked how he proves temperance or chastity to be duties, murder or adultery to be sins, he would not recur to miracles for an argument. These and the like duties are enforced by the Gospel: but were always truths and duties before our Saviour's coming: and we are in possession of them without the help of miracles or Revelation. And these are the doctrines, by which we try miracles. But the doctrines, which are to be proved by miracles are the revealed doctrines of Christianity, &c." *Sermons*, Vol. I. p. 303.

This

This universality was before insisted upon, when I treated of the substance and of the internal evidences of our Religion. Whatever may be commonly understood by it, we certainly ought not to estimate it primarily from the effects, which our Religion has produced on mankind. These, except in regions placed beyond the possibility of the Christian's reach, have from the beginning depended essentially upon ourselves. Christianity from the beginning addressed itself to us, as free agents : and, what ought ever to be urged in its favour, it was so published, as to leave us, amidst all our prejudices from worldly wisdom and worldly attachments of every kind, at full liberty, to accept or reject it, and to obey, or not, the injunctions which it gives concerning its future propagation. The universality of our Religion considered as an argument in its favour, ought therefore primarily to be estimated from its general design and other circumstances within itself : and if secondarily from its effects ; from these, however, no farther, than as they are considered under the influence of our own free will.

Its general design may immediately be collected from its general substance. This (as we have * seen) evinces that Christianity com-

* In the first Sermon.

menced with the creation of mankind ; that it has regularly been brought down through the different ages of their history ; and that, while it joins together and unites the whole human race by the most comprehensive and intimate connection, it also accounts for and remedies those universal evils in human existence, which man's unenlightened reason could neither explain, nor in any considerable degree alleviate. While mankind are deduced by Christianity from the same common stock, and involved in the same consequences of their first parent's voluntary guilt ; they are taught to what cause they are to ascribe the introduction of all their sin and misery. They are no longer left vainly to attempt with philosophy to reconcile their diversified crimes and sufferings with the original appointment of divine goodness. Christianity from one comprehensive cause traces out and explains the whole. Like the true system of the natural world, it accounts in the most simple and intelligible manner for intricacies and irregularities, which long confounded the subtlety and baffled all the ingenuity of conjectural philosophy. Having referred man's sin and all its destructive consequences to the same original perversion of free will, Christianity goes on to provide as comprehensive a remedy for these evils. The

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Heathens,

Heathens, indeed, could see and deplore the ^a corruption of human nature: but, as they knew not its ^b cause; so were they still more ignorant of its proper ^c remedy. They were too conscious of the guilt of sin, not to be convinced of the punishment, which it deserved at the hands of infinite justice: and at the same time too sensible of its influence over the best men, to suppose their actions could merit reward, much less eternal happiness, from an all perfect God. They were, therefore, induced through fear either to counteract their general apprehensions and to deny a future state of retribution, or to ^d adjust it to their own infirmities and demerits. The idea of an all-perfect Redeemer and of universal sanctification and acceptance through him, however revealed to their forefathers, yet when corrupted by idolatry and lost in super-

^a See Stillingfleet's Orig. Sac. p. 509—514.

^b See the same, p. 476—500.

^c Porphyry is made to say by St. Augustine: “ nondum receptam unam sectam quæ universalem viam animæ contineat liberandæ.” De Civit. Dei, l. x. c. 32.

^d We may learn from Homer of what sort the future life was which the Heathens expected. Achilles is described by him as saying to Ulysses in the regions below,

Μη μοι θανατοι γε παραυδα φαιδιμ' Οδυσσευ·

Βελομην κ' απηρερος εων δητευμεν αλλω

Ανδρι· παρ' ακληρω ω μη βιοτος πολυς ειη

Η πασι νεκυεσι καταφθιμενοισιν ανασειν.

Odyss. ια'. l. 487.

stition,

stitution, was not to be recovered by the most daring effort of human conjecture. But, what man could not conceive, must less expect, Christianity had from the beginning ordained, was gradually preparing, and at length accomplished in the Gospel-covenant. Infinite justice and goodness, having been vindicated with regard to the commencement of man's imperfections, are reconciled in his pardon by the merits and intercession of the second Person in the Godhead. By these means eternal happiness is again offered to mankind, and the road to it is opened by an universal atonement for those imperfections of human nature, which were an invincible stumbling-block to every other system of future rewards. "God spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all." Such, and so comprehensive is Christianity in its general design.

Its other internal and particular parts are not less universally calculated for the instruction and happiness of all mankind. Nothing is to be found in its precepts, adapted to one state or people, and not to all. In Christ Jesus there is no difference between Jew and Greek, bond and free, male and female. He, by whom all the nations of the

* Rom. viii. 32.

earth were at first separated from one family, again unites them as brethren under the same laws and into the same communion. And that no one might be debarred of access to the Religion, which was thus designed for the happiness of all; the New Testament was evidently calculated by its plainness and simplicity for the instruction of the lowest and most illiterate in every age and nation: herein remarkably differing not only from the doctrines of unassisted reason, which are not to be investigated in their different relations without the learning and labor of philosophy; but also from the antecedent parts of Revelation. As these latter were the obscure ^f commencement of Christianity and as they were intended particularly for the Jews, they often abound in sublime and figurative representations; which, perhaps, can thoroughly be understood by those Oriental nations only, whose study and delight they were. But the language of the New Testament, like its doctrine, is universal. Every one is enabled without difficulty to partake of its benefits. Every one also is invited to partake of them. ^g“Come unto me
“all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I

^f “The ancient Patriarchs” (says Cave after Eusebius)
“were the Christians of the old world.”—

Primitive Christianity, Vol. I. p. 22.

^g Matt. xi. 28.

“ will

“ will give you rest,” was the Redeemer’s affectionate address to mankind. ^h “ Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature ” was the commission, with which he sent forth his disciples. A commission, which the very existence itself of the New Testament proves that they executed, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, in such a manner, as to leave their successors abundant means to make the Gospel known in process of time to every individual throughout the world.

I have above said that the effects, produced on mankind by Christianity, will as long as we are free agents depend essentially upon ourselves : and that its universality ought not to be estimated from these effects any farther, than as they are considered under the influence of man’s free will. But, even under this mode of consideration, they will afford convincing proofs of the unlimited extent of our Religion. Though Christianity was so proposed to mankind from the beginning, as to leave them at full liberty to accept or reject it ; yet, on its first publication, it was immediately embraced by multitudes. In succeeding ages it was established in the most civilized and most powerful empires. And in our own time we

^h Mar. xvi. 15.

know that it is the Religion of all those, who are justly ranked among the enlightened nations of the earth. That it is not professed at present by more of the unenlightened inhabitants of our globe is to be ascribed, in the countries placed beyond our reach, to similar dispensations of Providence with those, which withheld for so many ages the coming itself of the Redeemer: in the countries, accessible to us, it is to be ascribed, not to our Religion, but, to our own imperfections; to our want of Christian zeal to propagate it among distant nations, or rather, perhaps, to our want of Christian virtue to recommend it by our conduct to their acceptance. It has, however, widely extended its salutary influence among those who are not its actual professors. It has improved the morality of both ⁱ Mahometans and Pagans: it has also improved their religious creeds. And certainly our modern unbelievers would not exceed the most subtle of Heathen philosophers in the principles of natural Religion; if they had not access to that Gospel, which they affect to despise. This diffusion of our Religion, under all its various and peculiar disadvantages from its first propagation to the present hour, has not only been deemed by ^k men of

ⁱ Secker's Sermons, Vol. II. p. 257.

^k See Jortin's Remarks, Vol. II. p. 149.

the best historical information sufficient to free it from all objection in this respect; it has, moreover, been ever insisted upon by them, as a powerful proof of its truth. But there is one effect, which we are encouraged to expect from Christianity, and which (though it is itself also under the influence of man's free will) will more than make up for any deficiency, which can possibly be supposed in the preceding effects, considered as proofs of the universality of our Religion. We are ¹ encouraged humbly to expect that the atonement of our great Redeemer will be as extensive as the influence of the first man's fall, and that no one will be excluded from some at least of its benefits, but such as wilfully shut their eyes against the truth, and, either from the pride of human reason or the lust of sensual pleasure, reject so great salvation.

In this manner does Christianity carry with it a remedy for the deficiencies above pointed out in natural Religion;—First, it is calculated to lead mankind to future happiness by the complete knowlege, which it conveys to

Mr. Moyle says on this subject: “The progress of Christianity, considering its late rise and the constant opposition it met with, is even on my moderate computation prodigious and to be accounted for by nothing but the divine Providence.”
Works, 8vo, Vol. II. p. 327.

¹ See the first Sermon.

them,

them, of themselves, of their duty and its obligation, and of their attainable acceptance with God;—Secondly it was accompanied with external and divine attestations of its truth;—and Thirdly it is distinguished by its universality.

If these things, then, are certain; if natural Religion evinces that there is an all-perfect God, the Creator and Preserver of all things; if it evinces also from the present circumstances of our existence that there will be a future state of retribution; if at the same time this Religion is essentially deficient in its instruction, in its proofs, and, as a system which is too difficult for the investigation of^m common capacities, in its extent; and if, under these circumstances, any Revelation should be set forth, confirming what is evinced by natural Religion and remedying what is deficient in it; then we must either confess the truth of such a Revelation, or (what is the worst blasphemy) suppose God himself to have favoured an imposition upon mankind: especially too, when we recollect that one of the deficiencies

^m The Religion of the great bulk of mankind in the heathen world has ever been ultimately derived from that state of nature (so called in contradistinction to a state of pure Revelation) in which man was left after the fall and after the deluge, and in which he was assisted by tradition and divine Grace no less than by his own reason. But the natural Religion, concerning which I am here speaking, whatever may be its real foundation, is supposed to depend entirely upon human reason.

of natural Religion, remedied by the supposed Revelation, is the want of external and divine proofs. For, what reason to the utmost extent of its abilities recommends and such proofs confirm, is unquestionably the voice of God, speaking distinctly to every intelligent creature.

Thus I have attempted to state in a summary manner the arguments, adducible in proof of the truth of our Religion, and consequently in vindication of the answer which may be given from thence concerning the Hope that is in us.

In justice, however, to a cause, which has been defended in the ablest and fullest manner, I must repeat the observation, with which I entered upon this part of my subject, “ that it
 “ is impossible to comprehend within a small
 “ compass a regular compendium of the whole,
 “ or even of the more important part, of the
 “ arguments by which the truth of our holy
 “ Religion may be proved.” The repetition of this observation cannot but be necessary in an age when superficial vindications of our Religion are found to do as much injury to the cause, which they defend; as the writings, against which they are commonly levelled. Since many, even of those who think their Religion worthy of serious attention, contenting themselves with such cursory treatises,
 are

are naturally led to impute their imperfections to the subject itself: and, because some parts are passed over in silence and others very briefly handled, they conclude at once either that nothing, or that very little, can be said in their behalf. But, if men are really in earnest and wish to give the arguments in favour of Christianity a fair examination; let them attentively peruse the discourses delivered at Mr. Boyle's Lecture. Or if this should be thought too laborious an undertaking, let them read and thoroughly digest what ⁿ Bishop Pearson has written on the creed; and they will find, especially in the former case, so many reasons assigned for the truth of every part of our Religion; that neither the insinuations of its enemies, nor the injudicious zeal of its friends will ever after be likely to shake their Faith. The importance of the enquiry must convince every sensible man that his time could not be better employed. And the consequence of it to every ^o well-disposed man will be such a full

ⁿ They, to whom Bishop Pearson's writings on the creed may appear too abstracted, will find a most perspicuous and satisfactory collection of the arguments in defence of our Religion in Bishop Burnet's very valuable exposition of the 39 Articles.

^o Swift in his Letter to a young Clergyman goes so far as to say, "There is one observation which I never knew to fail, and "I desire you will examine it in the course of your life, that "no gentleman of a liberal education and regular in his "morals did ever profess himself a free-thinker."

Miscell. Vol. I. p. 285.

assurance

assurance of the truth of our Religion, as must inspire him with that settled ^p peace of mind, and pleasing confidence with regard to futurity, which alone can constitute the happiness of a rational being. Since to conclude the present head with the words of an admired modern ^q writer: “What true Religion and true philosophy dictate of God and Providence and man is so charming, so consonant with all the finer feelings in human nature; that every man of taste, who hears of it, must wish it to be true: and I never yet heard of one person of candour, who wished to find the evidence of the Gospel satisfactory and did not find it so.”

^p Nothing can exhibit a more striking contrast to the joyful expectations, derived from pure Religion, than the miserable consequences of Scepticism. The latter are well exemplified in the series of Mr. Hume's writings. After he has endeavoured to wrest from us all the pleasing confidence, which we might derive from Christianity, by his treatise of human nature, his essays, and his Dialogues; he concludes his sceptical works with a defence of suicide and an attempt to prove the mortality of the soul. After depriving his admirers of the most valuable consolations of this life, he surely makes them but poor amends by telling them at last that they may cut their throats and safely depend upon eternal annihilation.

^q See Beattie on truth, p. 447. 8vo, 5th. Edit.

S E R M O N VII.

1 P E T. III. 15.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man, that asketh you a reason of the Hope that is in you.

HAVING finished the parts of my design, which relate to the substance, history, and evidences of our Religion, it remains that I speak concerning the objections which are urged in opposition to its truth.

This last topic unhappily furnishes abundant matter for our consideration. For, as superstition and bigotry have ever attempted to preclude a discordancy of opinion with regard to Christianity by discouraging enquiries into its evidences; so contrary prejudices have uniformly led to the opposite extreme, and this most benevolent of all institutions, instead of securing the respect by providing for the welfare of mankind, has been treated with the most licentious freedom. Whatever be the
cause

cause of these prejudices against our Religion, the effect of them is indisputable. Offences in Revelation have been industriously fought after: and the objections, in which they are urged, direct themselves against every article that comes recommended by its authority.

To expose the futility of each particular among these objections has furnished the learning of ages with ample employment. According to the plan, which I have laid down, I am to content myself under the present head with pointing out the general sources of such objections, and with showing that a forcible removal of these offences by divine interposition would be inconsistent with our Religion itself: concluding the whole with a particular account of those objections, which are advanced against our Religion from the pretensions of philosophy. Thus limited, however, the present head, no less than the preceding ones, will suggest irrefragable reasons, by which we may satisfy both ourselves and others, concerning the Hope that is in us.

As this head will supply sufficient matter for our consideration at two different times; I shall make what relates to the general sources of objection the subject of our immediate consideration, and reserve for the next opportunity

opportunity the particular objections with which I am to conclude.

It hath ^a already been remarked “ that the whole strength of Atheism consists in contradicting the universal reason of mankind : that Atheists have no principle and can have none, and therefore that they can never reason, but only confidently deny or affirm.” I shall, therefore, not attempt to trace from any more immediate sources those objections against the being and attributes of God, which must all ultimately be referred either to the want of due attention to the objects which surround us, or to a spirit of unsupported contradiction ; and, without farther notice of them, shall proceed to the different objections, which are advanced against our Religion by men who admit both the existence and infinite perfection of God.

By some of these it is thought absurd that Revelation, or our Religion as it is contained in the Holy Scriptures and derived from an all-perfect author, should be at all the subject of offence ; and that emanations from the fountain of truth should furnish the most prejudiced sceptic with even an appearance of error. But such men would do well to consider

^a In the fifth Sermon.

the imperfections of human nature, and to enquire whether all the objections against Revelation ought not in reality to be ascribed to these imperfections, as to their proper sources.

We know in the first place that the purest stream may be rendered foul by the channel, through which it passes: and if we view man in his most enlightened state; we shall have no reason to wonder that instructions, committed to writing and conveyed in successive ages through his hands, should ^b lose much of their original purity. Besides, it appears necessary from the imperfections of mankind that Revelation should be attended with a variety of circumstances; which will give rise to objections, more extensive than are drawn from mere errors in the conveyance; and which will contribute in an eminent degree to render belief in its truth a matter of faith and not of demonstration. For, as containing a body of written instructions for the information and direction of its professors, at whatever time Revelation were given; its antiquity in subsequent ages would render many of those parts, which depend upon the construction of language and

^b However, it has happened, whether our adversaries will allow it to have happened providentially or not, that the corruptions of the sacred Text have neither been so numerous, nor of so great importance, as might have been expected.

the customs of mankind, obscure at least and uncertain. And where the obscurity and uncertainty of writings require at times the assistance of conjecture, it is well known that no original perfection can secure them against all the different kinds of contradiction and aspersion. Exclusive also of these general appendages on human imperfection, which are so common to all the very ancient writings, as to be allowed by men of candour to furnish no reasonable objection against any; there are numberless circumstances, arising from the incompetency of human judgement, which will affect such a system as the holy Scriptures unfold and bring unmerited censure upon it. A narrative, which commences with the creation, which relates during the progress of nearly four thousand years the most extraordinary occurrences of history, and which abounds with the greatest variety of matter, will be exposed to charges of misrepresentation; when it is submitted to readers, incapable of being furnished with an absolute and universal knowledge of facts. For, in a succession of many different things, it is probable that some will happen contrary to probability. Especially too, will

^c Aristotle cites from Agatho these lines;

Ταχ' αν-τις εικος αυτο τωτ' ειναι λεγοι
Βροτοισι πολλα τυυχανειν ηκ εικοτα'

and

this be the case where things natural and supernatural are intermixed with each other. Even the latter, though referred for their origin to the immediate interposition of the Deity, will, notwithstanding, leave beings of contracted and sceptical minds peculiar occasions of offence. Miracles, though related by eye-witnesses, will, as facts of a singular kind, be^d eminently exposed to every doubt, which can be insinuated against human testimony. And prophecies, which mean not to destroy free-agency, cannot at times escape the most injurious suspicions, which arise from intentional obscurity. Moreover, as we are unacquainted with the essence of God and the general economy of his moral government; those parts of Revelation, which ought, perhaps, to be thought the least exposed in themselves to plausible ob-

and remarks on them “*γίνεται γὰρ τὸ παρὰ τὸ εἶκος ὡς εἶκος καὶ τὸ παρὰ τὸ εἶκος.*”

Rhetoric. p. 385. 8vo—Edit. Cant 1728.

He had before cited to the same, or nearly the same, effect —p. 351.

Εἴπερ ἐστὶν ἐν βροτοῖς ψευδηγορεῖν
Πιθανόν, νομίζειν χεῖρ γὰρ καὶ τεραντίων
Ἀπίστ' ἀληθῆ ποῦνα συμβαίνειν βροτοῖς.

^d “Suppose for instance that the fact, which the testimony endeavours to establish, partakes of the extraordinary and the marvellous; in that case the evidence resulting from the testimony admits of a diminution greater or less in proportion as the fact is more or less unusual.”

Hume's Essays, Vol. II. p. 127.

jection,

jection, will not on that account be less confidently assailed by our adversaries. Thus the mysteriousness of passages in a dispensation, which, proceeding from God, must sometimes refer to the incomprehensible essence of its author, will from our inability to judge in these matters be construed into absurdity. And, as the reasons of God's dealings with man are past our finding out; according to our different conceptions of what he ought to do, objections will be urged against the time and manner, whenever or whatever it be, in which Revelation was first introduced and propagated in the world, against the kind of evidence by which its truth is confirmed, and against the means by which its proposed happiness is to be obtained. In the same manner, as we are unacquainted with the essences of every part of creation, no less than of the Creator himself, and are ever ready to supply the want of knowledge by a variety of conjecture; different kinds of objections will arise from a comparison of these different conjectures with Revelation: since the same unfavourable conclusion may be suggested against its truth, whether it contain more or less than was expected, and whether parts of it are misunderstood or gratuitously contradicted by its opponents. To the sources of objection here enumerated, and which are all immediately

derived from human imperfection, we may subjoin the effects of this imperfection on the manner in which our Religion has been explained, received, and defended, by Christians themselves; and the unmerited sarcasms, to which it has been exposed from the pious and interested artifice, no less than from the sensuality and ignorance of its professors.

And if, at length, in addition to all these circumstances, we take into our account the active influence of those corrupt and powerful motives, which will induce many to search out and extend to the uttermost all such means of discrediting divine Revelation; we shall not want sources to which we may refer the numberless objections advanced against our Religion.

How far it would be possible for Omnipotence itself to remove all these occasions of of-

* The sarcasms of this kind, to which our Religion has been exposed, do not proceed from Mr. Gibbon and Voltaire only. The philosophical Mr. Hume has founded a very considerable part of his objections against miracles on the fictions concerning the Abbè Paris and others. The inferences which he draws from fictitious miracles, and from our want of experience as to such extraordinary events (see the notes on the fifth Sermon) constitute almost the whole of his bold invective against the miraculous proofs of our Religion. And what he thus urges against miracles he applies without variation to prophecies also.

—See his *Essays* Vol. II. p. 147.

On so weak a foundation rest the writings, which are often found to unsettle the Faith and destroy the peace of unguarded readers!

fence,

fence, and to reduce our Religion to an indisputable and permanent certainty, without a previous annihilation of all the imperfections of our nature, I am not concerned at present to enquire. This question has been discussed, and the negative of it ingeniously maintained, by a † modern writer on the origin of evil. I am here engaged to prove that if the Deity were thus to interpose his almighty power; it would be inconsistent with our Religion itself.

But, before I proceed to this, I may observe, by way of general illustration, that the interposition, here described, would be evidently inconsistent with that course of things, which is universally established and approved in the natural world. If we consult the common appearances which surround us; we shall every where find circumstances similar to those complained of in Revelation. The constitution of things presents to our imperfect reason so many difficulties and uncertainties; as to demonstrate that in the natural world it is by no means the design of Providence to submit the propriety of his dispensations to our judgement, or to force us into action by any more persuasive motives, than rational probabilities. In the common and hourly occurrences of this

† Soame Jenyns.

life, we cannot foretell the certain consequence of the most vigorous exertions, nor ensure the success of the best principles. To have excluded, therefore, with the possibility of objection all appearance of uncertainty from Revelation would in reality have been to form the world, as ⁸ some partial observers of the divine dispensations insist it is formed, upon one plan and the Religion for it upon another. But such an enforcement of truth would not only be inconsistent with the course of nature (as hath been proved at large by Bishop Butler in his invaluable "Analogy", a work, which can never be recommended with too much earnestness to the Christian philosopher) but it would be inconsistent also, as I am to prove, with our Religion itself.

To prove this nothing more will be necessary than to call your attention to the information, which Christianity gives us concerning itself and the subject before us. The misfortune of most sincere unbelievers is, that they consider the Christian Religion in a very erroneous point of view. They consider it merely as a covenant made at some particular time between God and man without reference to any former transactions: and from thence

⁸ See Soame Jenyns's Internal Evidences.

they

they proceed to settle the degree of certainty, which they require of its truth. This, however, is not to consider Christianity, but a conceit of their own. No system was ever denied the privilege of explaining its own nature and limiting its extent : and according to that standard alone, which itself proposes, can it be fairly estimated. Christianity pretends not to be a covenant between two equal parties, nor even between a Creator and his creatures simply : but between an all-just and all-merciful God and fallen degenerate man. As such it ^h informs us of the cause of man's fall, and of the conditions, required on his part, to reinstate him in God's favour. In the perversion of free will it points out the source of human misery : and, in the regulation of the same principle, a remedy for this misery through the merits of an all-perfect intercessor. For the privilege of free will, though wrested to the corruption, was still to be, according to its original design, the ultimate perfection of human nature. To this great foundation, therefore, of all rational and moral excellence was every precept, and every evidence of Christianity to be accommodated. The Saviour, who was sent from heaven to make

^h See the first Sermon.

atonement for man's original sin, while he promises the assistance of the Holy Spirit to his weakness, pardon to his frailties, and even remission of his greatest crimes upon that repentance and faith, which carry with them a reformation of life; still leaves the sincere obedience, which was to procure all these blessings, in man's own power. And those emphatical words in the last chapter of that book, which closes the whole revealed will of God, ⁱ "he that is unjust let him be unjust
 " still, and he that is filthy let him be filthy
 " still," convey the manifest intention of every part of Scripture with regard to those, who are determined to persevere in disobedience. Correspondently with this, such arguments only are offered to establish the Faith of mankind, as are sufficient to convince dispassionate enquirers. Besides, we are expressly informed by one of the Apostles that there were ^k "some
 " things in St. Paul's writings hard to be un-
 " derstood, which they who are unlearned and
 " unstable wrest, as they do also the other
 " Scriptures, to their own destruction." In the same manner our blessed Saviour is called "a ^l stumbling-stone and a rock of offence:" and so far from compelling men to receive his

ⁱ Rev. xxii. 11.^k 2 Pet. iii. 16.^l Rom. ix. 33.

doctrines, he himself explicitly ^m declares that to those, whose hearts were waxed gross, whose ears were dull of hearing, and who had closed their eyes, the mysteries of the kingdom of God were represented in parables; that seeing they might see and not perceive, and hearing they might hear and not understand. And, however often tempted, never did he condescend by any more convincing proofs of his divine mission, ⁿ than those which he had before given, to win their attention, who like the deaf adder stop their ears. Indeed, the infidelity of his audience often made him withdraw the means designed for their conviction instead of adding to them. Thus we are told of his own countrymen that ⁿ “ he did not many “ mighty works among them, because of their “ unbelief.” Or, as another Evangelist expresses it, ^o “ he could not do any mighty work “ among them,” for that reason. Nor need we wonder at the expression: since the whole tenor of Revelation required such a promulgation of our Religion, as should leave those at liberty to reject it, in whom the God of this world had blinded their eyes. For, though divine mercy had interposed to rouse mankind from the lethargic security of continued sin;

^m Matt. xiii. 11—15.

ⁿ Matt. xiii. 58.

^o Mark. vi. 5, 6.

and had engaged through the merits of a Redeemer both to supply them with supernatural means of resisting the corruption of their fallen nature, and to procure acceptance for their sincere, though imperfect, services; yet is nothing farther any where proposed by their Redemption. Man's state at first was only probationary: to no better, therefore, can we possibly expect that he should be advanced by the forfeiture of his innocence. Besides, if the fallen angels, those dreadful examples of almighty vengeance, all perished; how would it have been consistent with the same infinite justice that any other fallen creature should at once be pardoned and invested with eternal happiness? Or, what is the same, that his actions should be determined by fatal necessity, or his Faith constrained by irresistible demonstration, to a conformity with such duties or doctrines, as would unavoidably lead in their consequences to eternal happiness? Those angels, indeed, as we may infer, fell each separately by his own presumption. But what else will they do, who perish under the Gospel-covenant? Had God condemned all, that were in Adam's loins, to eternal punishment for the sin of their first parent; his mercy might, perhaps, have been called in question with some appearance of reason. But he has
more

more than vindicated this his darling attribute. Of his own will he has redeemed mankind from their first fall : and it is to himself alone that each man must impute his second. To restore the human race even to this capacity of happiness was not effected without a sacrifice, transcendently dignified by partaking of the same Person with the Son of God. To have done more for them would have required a sacrifice of a very different kind : the sacrifice (if it may be so called) of divine justice. Instead, therefore, of the blessings of eternal life being forced upon us by the removal of objections from our Religion, it is singularly and awfully remarkable in what manner restraints are every where, on the contrary, withdrawn from our Faith. In the natural world, he, that filleth all things with his presence, has condescended for a season to retire (as it were) from this scene of probation, or in the ^p Scripture-language to hide himself; and to leave mankind to themselves and the conclusions of their own reason, save that he every moment supports the profligate sensualists, who, because they do not see and hear him, dare deny his existence. And, under the Christian dispensation, the light of the glorious Gospel is left to our own

^p Job. xxiii. 8, 9. Isaiah, xlv. 15.

discovery and application ; though at the same time it diffuses its splendor around those very unbelievers, who are studious to retort every ray of divine illumination against the great luminary itself from which it issues. Nor do any of the arguments, drawn from the creation, more fully prove the infinite perfection of its author, than this his government of the moral world, explicitly declared in Revelation, and uniformly experienced in human life. Having, through Christianity, again prepared the means, and proposed the conditions of happiness for mankind, he determined to leave the ultimate reception and operation of this Religion to that free will, by which they were from the beginning to stand or fall. And this, once resolved by a being of infinite perfection, none of those passions and resentments, which disturb and frustrate the councils of man, have ever been able to invalidate. “ His ⁹righteousness standeth like the strong mountains, and “ his judgements are like the great deep.” At the same time also lest unbelievers should presumptuously conceive, that, by deriding, they moreover defeat the councils of the great Author of Revelation ; he has expressly foretold, in addition to all the other information which

⁹ Pf. xxxvi. 6.

he has given us on the subject, not only that “ it must needs be that offences come,” but also that “ there should come in the last days “ scoffers, walking after their own lusts:” men, who, we may presume, were to resemble those, described by the excellent Hooker, and “ bear the title of wise men and scribes and “ great disputers of this world; who are no- “ thing indeed less, than what in shew they “ most appear; and who, being addicted unto “ their own wills, use their wit, their learn- “ ing, and all the wisdom they have, to “ maintain that which their obstinate hearts “ are delighted with, esteeming in the frantick “ error of their minds the greatest madness in “ the world to be wisdom, and the highest “ wisdom foolishness.” The scoffs of unbelievers, therefore, thus foretold, instead of defeating the councils of the great author of Revelation, serve on the contrary to display the veracity of his predictions: and the long-suffering, with which they are permitted to persist in opposition to the truth, proves only that the perverseness of man cannot prevail to annul the merciful offers of that all-perfect Being, who has declared, “ I am Jehovah,

^r Matt. xviii. 7.

^s 2 Pet. iii. 3.

^t Eccl. Pol. b. iii. c. viii. p. 75. Edit. 1666.

^u Mal. iii. 6.

“ I change not : therefore, ye fons of Jacob
 “ are not confumed.” Whatever, then, unbelievers may say, or immoral men do ; it is not consistent with what our Religion declares of itself, nor with the requisitions and predictions which it holds forth to its professors, that any force should be applied to restrain the principles of the one, more than the practice of the other. Christianity has engaged to save neither without his own * voluntary concurrence : and surely its truth cannot be affected by permitting, what on the refusal of such concurrence it has most solemnly denounced, the eternal destruction of both.

Such are the sources from which the objections against our Religion are drawn ; and so inconsistent with it is any forcible removal of these offences.

But, lest any one should imagine that the method of reasoning, here pursued, might be extended to justify the absurdities of any religious system whatever, it may be a proper caution, before I dismiss these general observations on the objections against our Religion, to remark at large, that I have been attempting

* Erasmus very justly says in his paraphrase on St. Matt. xxiii. 37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets &c. “ Cui semel data est arbitrii libertas, invitus ferre vari non potest.”

to account for the endless variety of these objections, and not to apologize for them, as charges which can be directed against our Religion and which are founded in truth. Christians are as ready as their enemies to confess that the Deity can never be supposed to reveal any thing contradictory to reason: and Christianity needs not the assistance of subterfuges. However many of its parts may have been controverted; no part of it was ever proved to be false or irrational. The numberless absurdities not only of the best-fancied hypothesis of Deism, but of every other pretension to Revelation, besides that of the Holy Scriptures; even of the pretensions of Jews and Christians themselves, when they desert the written word and descend to oral tradition; immediately discover a fallibility of human origin. But, the difficulties, attending Christianity, are of a very different kind and prove only that it does not mean to counteract, with regard to itself, the natural consequences of our imperfections; but leaves those consequences to form that essential part of our trial, which requires a * good disposition, as previously necessary, that we may know of the doctrines of our Religion whether they be of God: and

* John vii. 17.

which

which requires, above all, a spirit of investigation, the reverse of that, which betrays itself on subjects of sceptical dispute. For, “^y thus saith the high and lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.” In conformity with these requisitions, which are so strongly insisted upon in the holy Scriptures as to be made the sources of predestination to eternal life, assent is enjoined without demonstration and the Christian’s Faith is made an indication of a well-disposed and humble mind, as well as the deduction of an unprejudiced judgement. To an affectation in our first parents of being wise, as Gods, Revelation ascribes our present misery: and from a modest use of that reason, which was designed for man, does this gracious dispensation encourage us to hope for a restoration to happiness. To this reason it appeals, commanding us to ^z search the Scriptures and as ^a wise men to judge for ourselves; but so to judge, as to remember that the Christian’s Faith must ever be a virtue. And as it cannot, consistently with this appellation, require demonstrative conviction (for where then would be

^y If. lvii. 15.^z John v. 39.^a 1 Cor. x. 15.

its pretension to virtue?); so neither can it, conformably with that reason, by which, as the candle of the Lord, we are to examine Revelation itself, be founded on absurdities or inconsistencies. As the Christian's Faith does not admit of demonstration; so neither will it acquiesce in enthusiasm or superstition. It rises still more above these latter, than it falls short of the former. It requires all the evidence, which the nature of the thing itself suggests; but, no more. It requires that a Revelation, sent from God for the benefit of mankind, should be commensurate with all the real wants with regard to belief as well as practice, which can be alleged by well-disposed and humble men, and that it should throughout be consistent with the glory of God. It does not require that Revelation should carry with it such irresistible proof of its truth, as to remove every offence and stop the mouth of infidelity. This would destroy free will and render human life no longer a state of probation. What our Religion is in its substance, its history, and its evidences, we have seen. It hath appeared in all these respects not only to be such, as to confirm in the highest degree the description here given of the Faith required of us; but such also as will abundantly satisfy every expectation of the well-disposed and

humble inquirer, and preserve him, under the influence of this Faith, unmoved by all the attempts of infidelity. Filled with pious gratitude for the assurances, afforded him of the truth of his Religion, he will confess both the origin and the irremediable nature of the objections advanced against it; and will adore that infinite wisdom, which has so dispensed to mankind its gracious communications, as to enable them by voluntary obedience here to cooperate with their great Redeemer in securing for their inheritance that perfect happiness, which is designed to be their everlasting recompense hereafter.

Having said thus much (according to my original proposal) concerning the objections in general which are advanced against our Religion; and having, moreover, added a caution with regard to the manner in which I have treated of them, I shall proceed in the next discourse to the particular objections with which I am to conclude.

S E R M O N VIII.

1 P E T. III. 15.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man, that^o asketh you a reason of the Hope that is in you.

TH E R E are no objections among all those, which are comprehended under the sources enumerated in my last discourse, against which Christians of an inquisitive mind will require that more care should be taken to guard their Faith and to supply them with reasons in vindication of the Hope that is in them; than those, which are to be the subject of our present consideration. The objections to our Religion, urged immediately in favour of sensual gratifications, are notoriously the offspring of a vicious disposition and retain few formidable advocates. But those, which are drawn from philosophy, assume the form of rational enquiries; too often under this specious appearance discrediting our Religion with

the followers and admirers of human science. To hold forth cautions, therefore, against the delusiveness of philosophy is one of the most zealous concerns of the ^ainspired penmen: and, as nothing more powerfully dissuades men from error, than an exposition of its real principles; I cannot, perhaps, more effectually cooperate with these cautions in the present discourse, than by endeavouring particularly to point out in it the origin and foundation of the objections, which are thus advanced against our Religion from the pretensions of philosophy.

It has been observed by a celebrated ^b critic, that there is no source of excellence in writing, which will not produce the contrary effect in such as are forward to distinguish themselves by some unusual display of genius. If this observation be accommodated to our present subject; we shall cease to wonder that the study of philosophy, which has supplied humble enquirers with so many arguments in support of Revelation, should supply men of an opposite character with objections against its truth. And if we reflect that abstracted reasonings, no less than immediate discoveries in nature, form a part of philosophy, and that both may equally be directed against Revelation; we shall far-

^a Col. ii. 8.

^b Longinus, Sect. v.

ther cease to wonder that these objections should at length become innumerable.

Those, which are drawn from abstracted reasonings extend themselves to every part of our Religion.

For, as, from the variety of causes to which effects may be referred, or to which, through our ignorance of the essences of things, they appear capable at least of being referred, there is no occurrence in common life, which will not afford pleas for assigning it to some false cause; so there is no subject, accounted for in Revelation, which has not furnished arguments to prove the possibility of its reference to some other cause, than what is suggested in the inspired writings; and which has not at length been studiously wrested from its true origin by an illogical deduction of the agency of that other cause from the existence of the general effect.—Thus the creation, formation, and government of the universe have been ascribed to necessity, or chance; as it displays more, or less, order to sceptical examiners.—Matter itself, as it exists under certain modes perceivable

^c By the position, as it is called in hypothetical reasoning, of the antecedent from the position of the consequent. Aristotle mentions this, as a thing which is very natural, but very fallacious: “Οιονται γαρ ανθρωποι, οταν τεδι οντος η γινομενη τοδι γενεται, “ εΙ το υστερον εστι, και το πρωτερον ειναι η γινεσθαι· τητο δε εστι ψευδος.”

Poet. c. 24.

only by the senses, has been referred for the source of this its disputed existence to mere perceptions; while these again have been ^d confounded with ideas.—Spirit also, as it partakes with the body of similar imperfections in infancy, of similar gradations of improvement in advancing years, and of the same, even sometimes incapacitating, sensations throughout life, has been denied any other existence than what it has been said to derive from the precarious harmony of bodily organs.—By as sophistical a method of referring things to new and suppositious causes, the motives, from which the most common of men's actions proceed, have been erected into principles of necessity and invested with the absolute control of the human mind.—Nor have there been wanting philosophers to ascribe the contradictory opinions of different ages and nations on the same subjects, and even on moral virtues, to the impossibility of any criterion of truth and to a total want of moral difference in men's actions.—While others, with an equally flattering remedy for the consciousness of guilt, have boldly asserted, because men are assaulted by different degrees of temptation and endowed with different powers of resistance, that,

^d See Beattie's Essay on Truth, p. 242, &c.

therefore,

therefore, whatever is called virtue in mankind proceeds either from circumstances of situation, or from natural frame and constitution.

Attempts having been thus made to subvert the principles of Revelation, and indeed of all Religion, by assuming, as the real causes of things, those which (to indulge scepticism in its most absurd positions) are no more than the possible causes of them; it is unnecessary to show that the same has been the case also with regard to all the remaining and appropriate parts of Revelation.

The truth is; things, if they exist at all, must exist under some circumstances: and, while these circumstances may be referred through ignorance or artifice to fictitious causes, the mind of man, when ambitious to support the credit of human sufficiency, will acquiesce in any extravagant fiction, sooner than accede to the doctrines of Revelation.

To expose, therefore, the want of foundation in objections against Revelation, derived from such an origin, it is by no means required to prove it to be impossible that the causes, assumed in them, should produce the assigned effects. From the possibility no logic can ever infer the reality of such a production.

* That necessity and chance may be causes of things, &c.

Besides,

Besides, proofs of the impossibility of it cannot be universally and decisively adduced without a knowledge of the essences of things. To expose the want of solid foundation in the objections before us, it is required only to show that the causes, laid down in Revelation, are sufficient to account for the appearances of things : or, that if Revelation be true ; things will exist under those very circumstances, from which new causes are perversely inferred and directed to disprove its truth :—that (with regard to the particulars above instanced) if an allwise God did create the universe ; it would be governed by regular laws : and that even this regularity in the operation of some parts of the creation would, from the interference of other as well regulated parts of it, produce at times effects, which may appear to be devoid of all regulation and order :—that if matter were produced by Omnipotence for the use of beings endowed with sense ; it is reasonable to expect that it should be subject to their perception by means of the organs of sense, and this too in proportion only as those organs are employed about it :—that if the spirit of man were designed for an existence, as progressive at least in improvement as his body ; its original state may well be as proportionably imperfect, and its proficiency in attainments

attainments as gradual as that of his body : and that if bodily enjoyments and sufferings be so many trials of the spirit ; it will be affected by all these sensations, and amidst diversities of probation the corruptible body will in different degrees press down the soul :— that if human actions be left to the guidance of reason ; they cannot, though absolutely free, be a mere effect of the will, but require to proceed from some motives and to be directed to some ends :— that if mankind be endowed with freedom of thought, and be reduced to a state of general corruption ; it may be expected not only that individuals, but also that communities, should differ in their opinions of things ; and that these differences, when widened by the contrary operation of ignorance on the one side and enlightened knowledge on the other, should at length terminate in contradictions of the greatest importance :— lastly, that if men have different talents allotted them ; their trials, or degrees of temptation, will be as different : and if one destined consequence and reward of virtue in another life be an exemption from all temptation ; it is consistent with the analogy of things that the same cause should in some degree produce the same effect in this life, and that good men should

should find the least difficulty in controlling their passions.

When it has been thus shown that the appearances of things, or the circumstances under which things exist, are accounted for and (morally speaking) necessary, if the doctrines of Revelation be true; no additional argument can be wanted to ensure for us a lasting triumph over the ^f preceding and similar attempts of metaphysical sophistry: since, our Religion itself both requires and explains that very state of things, from which objections against its truth are thus perversely drawn; and it is well known that the first rule of philosophizing explicitly declares, “that more causes of things
“are not to be admitted, than are both true
“and sufficient to explain their phenomena.”

But, surely, we ought not to wonder, if the enemies of our Religion have been able to employ the suppositions of abstracted philosophy to its prejudice; since such metaphysical subtleties are so thoroughly adverse to divine truth, that even attempts to reconcile them have been attended (as we have ^g seen above) with per-

^f All these objections are of the same kind with that, which Aristotle calls “*λυσις φαινομενη, αλλ’ εκ αληθους αιει*,” and proceeds to observe concerning it, “*ε γαρ οτι εκ εικος λυει ο ενισταμενος, αλλ’ οτι εκ αναγκαιον*.” Rhetor. 8vo. p. 390.

^g See the introduction to the third sermon.

nicious consequences to Christianity. In the early ages of our Religion, when the zealots of such systems had nothing to oppose to its recent evidences, they did not come over to its side without bringing with them a numerous train of errors. Sooner than they would relinquish their former studies, they forced the simple doctrines of Christianity into a consistency with all the wild reveries of both the Gnostic and the Platonic School. The plainness of Revelation was foolishness to these lovers of disputation : and divine truths appeared to be unworthy of reason, till they had been tempered with the most extravagant of its sallies. Nor did men of science (as they were esteemed) betray less prejudice and ignorance of true Christianity, than the ^b Emperours who proposed to the senate to enroll Christ among the Roman Deities. But, as I have shewn that the metaphysical attempts of the enemies of our Religion to introduce new causes of things are devoid of all solid foundation ; and as care is at present abundantly taken, by the wisdom of Church establishments, to hinder its injudicious professors from again incorporating philosophical conceits with the doctrines of our

^b Adrian and Severus Alexander.

See Jortin's Remark's, Vol. II. p. 90.

Religion ; I need add no more, either for our satisfaction or caution, on this part of my subject ; and may proceed to the objections against our Religion which are immediately drawn from discoveries in nature.

These objections are drawn from discoveries of this kind, which are either general and systematical, or particular and separate : and all of them originate in erroneous opinions with regard to the intention of our Religion, or with regard to the discoveries themselves from which they are drawn.

Thus, in consequence of such general and systematical discoveries, objections are urged against our Religion on account of the coincidence of its language with popular opinions concerning natural appearances, and its want of superior information on these subjects. For, though the ¹ authors of the general discoveries in natural science, which enlighten the present age, have been fully convinced of their consistency with Revelation ; yet we frequently find admirers and followers of those great men in all other respects, forward in this to maintain a contrary opinion. They are offended that Revelation should either countenance (ac-

¹ Newton, Boyle, &c.

any erroneous system, or omit the opportunity of proving its superior wisdom by explaining the true system of nature. But, such men have yet to learn the real intention of Revelation. By religious, as opposed to other, instruction was this gracious dispensation to provide a remedy for the fatal consequences of man's original transgression. Thus calculated it neither approves, nor condemns, the natural systems of its age. Having in the introduction to its own history established the foundation of every rational system of natural knowledge, having established in the Deity the Creator and preserver of universal nature, it supports not in its subsequent parts any particular reasonings of men concerning his works. It simply relates such truths, as are connected with Religion and refer to man himself. It adopts not any system of natural philosophy. When circumstances of this kind must necessarily be referred to; with whatever human system its expressions may coincide, these references are so made, as plainly to show that the holy Scriptures mean not to philosophize, but to propose their instructions in terms which are most easily understood. The language; which philosophers have used in every age, the inspired writers have used of old. Philosophers have found it expedient with regard to natural appearances

appearances that the * errors of the generality of mankind should be admitted in discourses, designed for general apprehension. And Revelation has graciously been pleased to accommodate itself to the same expediency. Indeed, any other language would have required a previous explanation and avowal of the system, from which its terms were derived. And this would not only have been inconsistent with the general intention of Revelation; but also with that indulgence, which the Deity has from the beginning been pleased to extend to human reason. Had Revelation introduced any the best-founded system of modern physics; or had the Almighty Creator been pleased to disclose the councils themselves of his infinite wisdom; what would have been the consequence? Philosophy would immediately have become matter of Faith, and disbelief of any part of it a ¹ dangerous heresy. How many infidels would this, or that, man's fanciful hypothesis concerning the appearances of things have called forth? From the time of Ptolemy to Copernicus how many prejudices would the wisest of men have entertained against Revelation: and how few would have believed in a

* Philosophers universally speak of the rising of the Sun, &c.

¹ See Nichol's Conference with a Theist, Vol. I. p. 70.

system,

system, which appeared to contradict the testimony of their senses? Besides, though truth be one certain indivisible point; yet even good men think they may safely controvert the opinions, without impeaching the virtue, of their opponents, and in some cases scruple not to maintain their own conjectures for no better reason, perhaps, than because they are their own. But where Revelation had interposed its instruction, this liberty could by no means be innocent; and the human mind, having no choice of opinion left, would lose its greatest motive to exertion: while at the same time unlimited dependence upon authority (though divine), if it did not enervate all our faculties, would strongly tempt us to murmur against the requisition itself of such dependence, as the most slavish restraint. At present the God, who brought ^m every beast of the field and every fowl of the air to Adam to see what he would call them, has displayed the productions of creation before our eyes and left us to exercise that reason upon them, which he certainly endowed not in vain with any of its powers. He has commanded our Faith with regard to those religious doctrines, which are calculated to remedy the consequences of man's original

^m Gen. ii. 19.

transgression :

transgression: and which, few as they are, the sophistry of metaphysical philosophy has throughout attempted to subvert. In every other respect he has indulged us with perfect freedom of thought. It matters nothing to our salvation what systems of natural science we adopt, or whether we equally reject them all; provided only that we do not, with the impious Alphonfus, argue from our own presumption against the wisdom of the Creator, and blasphemously imagine that had we been admitted to the councils of the most High, we could have taught him better how to exert his Almighty power.

Exclusive, however, of objections against our Religion, which are thus drawn from general systems, others are urged against it in consequence of particular and separate discoveries in nature.

The history of Revelation is so immediately and intimately connected with the state of the world, that believers readily confess there is reason to expect a consistency between them; and the enemies of Christianity have in all ages been forward to avail themselves of the opportunities, which the conciseness of the Scripture-history and the infinite variety of appearances around us afford to cavil and disputation. But, so well do the particular discoveries,

coveries, which have been made in nature, correspond with the events, recorded in the Scriptures ; that they have given rise to few objections, except with regard to the time of creation, and the descent of mankind from the same common parents.

And even of these the former are founded on " conjectural inferences from particular discoveries, which might easily be answered by other conjectures on the same subjects ; and which it might, perhaps, be expedient thus to answer, were it not that these objections cannot, in reality, be directed to disprove the truth of our Religion. They extend only to the matter of our globe ; and are by no means to be directed against any position, which indisputably forms a part of the Mosaical writings, or which is essential to our religious history. For, could the most incontrovertible argument be adduced to prove the existence of this matter for numberless ages antecedent to the time assigned by Moses for the commencement of human existence ; such proof would

^a Whatever inferences some writers may draw from volcanos concerning the age of the world ; Sr. William Hamilton says with regard to the beds of lava in the neighbourhood of mount *Ætna* and *Vesuvius* : " I do not pretend to say that a just estimate can be formed of the great age of Volcanos from this observation, but some sort of conjecture might be made."

On Volcanos, p. 98, 99.

neither be necessarily ° irreconcilable with the Mosaical account of the creation, nor calculated in the least degree to refute any of those early and essential parts of our P history which Revelation has connected with the universal corruption and with the Redemption of mankind.

The objections, advanced against the common parentage of mankind both from the difference in their persons and situations, will require somewhat more of our attention. For, though they are founded, like the former, on conjectural reasonings; it must be confessed that they are not, like those objections, di-

° Moses indefinitely asserts (Gen. i. 1.) that “ In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” He then gives an account of the formation of the earth, which may refer to a very much later period. And when he says that God made the heavenly bodies, he may be supposed only to intimate that the parts of our globe were then fitted to transmit light; so that those bodies were then rendered visible to us, and might be said to have been made, as far as relates to the benefit which we derive from them. Such conjectures receive support from the difference between the word בָּרָא “ he created” which is used in the first verse, and עָשָׂה, which is used in the 7th and 16th verses, and is known very often to imply nothing more, than an adaptation or formation.

P The best human means of satisfying a rational enquiry into the time of creation, as far as this time is essentially connected with the Scripture history, must ever be sought for in the origin of arts and sciences, and in the general testimony of Heathen antiquity. And these have been proved (see Stillingfleet’s Orig. Sacr.) to be so decisive in favour of Revelation; that to be ignorant of such subjects is in reality to lose a most persuasive motive for believing in our holy Religion.

rected

rected against positions, which can be proved not to form indisputably a part of Revelation and not to be essentially connected with it. They are, however, at present so retrenched in their limits; as to have lost all the irresistible force, which they were supposed to carry against our Religion. For, whatever might¹ formerly be conjectured or reported concerning nations specifically distinguished in shape and stature from the rest of mankind; we are fully authorized by late discoveries to contradict every such insinuation, and to apply universally what a distinguished modern historian says of the inhabitants of America: "In proportion as science extends and nature is examined with a discerning eye, the wonders which amused ages of ignorance disappear, the tales of credulous travellers are forgotten, the monsters which

¹ Tacitus has given a concise account of some ancient relations concerning monsters, which were partly of the human species, and mentions in his concluding words what, probably, was the real origin of such fables: "Ut quisque a longinquo revererat, miracula narrabant, vim turbinum, et inauditas volucres, monstra maris, ambiguas hominum et belluarum formas: visa, sive ex metu credita." *Annal.* l. ii. c. 24.

² See the different voyages of Capt. Cook.

³ Robertson's *Hist. of America*, Vol. II. p. 76. 8vo, Edit. The same is also fully asserted in Dr. Smith's "Essay on the causes of the variety of complexion and figure in the human species," p. 93—97. Edit. 1789.

⁴ What is said with regard to monsters of the human species is equally true as to monsters of other kinds. "The island of Ferro was celebrated for a century or two on the credit of a miraculous tree, single in its kind, enveloped in perpetual mists, and distilling water for the ample supply of the island.

“ they describe have been searched for in vain,
 “ and those provinces, in which they pretend
 “ to have found inhabitants of singular forms,
 “ are now known to be possessed by people no
 “ wise differing from the rest of the Ameri-
 “ cans.” The various complexions, therefore,
 by which men are distinguished from each
 other, may now be said to constitute the prin-
 cipal difference in their persons. And though
 this variety has ever been supposed to proceed
 originally from climate ; yet shall we perhaps
 acquiesce more readily in the opinion from the
 ingenious and forcible manner, in which ^u it is
 maintained by the historian above cited. To

“ But this wonder, though vouched by several voyagers and by
 “ some as eye-witnesses, vanished at the approach of sober en-
 “ quiry, nor could a single native be found hardy enough to
 “ assert its existence.”

Voyage to new South Wales, 4to 1789. p. 22.

^u See Robertson's History of America, Vol. II. p. 74, &c.

What M. de Pagès says from his own experience on this sub-
 ject in that part of his travels round the world in the years 1767
 —1771, which relates to his passage over the great desert, is
 well worthy of our attention : “ The tribes, which frequent the
 “ middle of the desert, have locks somewhat crisped, exteme-
 “ ly fine, and approaching the woolly hair of the Negro. My
 “ own during the short period of my travels in those regions
 “ became more dry and delicate than usual, and receiving little
 “ nourishment from a checked perspiration showed a disposition
 “ to assume the same frizzled and woolly appearance : an en-
 “ tire failure of moisture, and the excessive heat of climate by
 “ which it was occasioned seem to be the principal causes of
 “ those symptoms ; my blood was become extremely dry, and
 “ my complexion differed little at last from that of a Hindoo
 “ or Arab.”

investigate

investigate all the causes which have cooperated in the production of the difference of complexion, and other less considerable differences of appearance, in the human species, and to defend the necessary positions by particular arguments, would not be consistent with the limits of a short discourse. The subject also itself has been well-nigh exhausted by a foreign naturalist of the present age. Buffon, though by no means a bigot in favour of the Scripture-history, asserts its cause in the fullest manner possible against the objection at present before us. This indefatigable philosopher enquires into all the real differences discoverable in men's persons; and at length from a number of the best-attested observations deduces the following memorable conclusion: "From every circumstance may be obtained a proof that mankind are not composed of species essentially different from each other, that on the contrary there was originally but one individual species of men, which, after being multiplied and diffused over the whole surface of the earth, underwent di-

* The differences in the persons of mankind, remarked by Cook and other late voyagers, do not vary from those, which are stated and examined by Buffon.

† See Vol. I. of Buffon's History, translated by Kenrick and Murdock, from p. 171, to p. 292.

‡ See Buffon as above, Vol. I. p. 291.

“vers changes from the influence of climate,
 “from the difference of food and the mode of
 “living, from epidemical disorders, as also
 “from the intermixture varied ad infinitum
 “of individuals, more or less resembling each
 “other: that these alterations were at first
 “less considerable and confined to individuals;
 “that afterwards from the continued action
 “of the above causes becoming more general,
 “more sensible, and more fixed, they formed
 “varieties of the species: that these varieties
 “have been and still are perpetuated from ge-
 “neration to generation, in the same manner
 “as certain disorders and certain maladies pass
 “from parents to their children.” Besides,
 moreover, our Religion does not want advo-
 cates to espouse its cause and to repel the at-
 tacks of this sort, to which it is every day ex-
 posed. What has been last objected on the
 subject before us by philosophers of more en-
 terprise than ’ sober reflexion in their endea-

’ We have a sufficient proof of Lord Kaïms’s want of sober
 reflexion on such occasions in what Dr. Smith remarks on his
 inferences from the Giagas: “He thinks it certain that the
 “Giagas, a nation of Africa, could not have descended from
 “one origin with the rest of mankind, because, totally unlike
 “all others, they are void of natural affection. They kill, says
 “his Lordship, all their own children as soon as they are born,
 “and supply their places with youth stolen from the neighbouring
 “tribes. If this character had been true, even his Lordship’s
 “zeal for a good cause might have suffered him to reflect, that
 “the Giagas could not have continued a separate race longer
 “ than

vours to undermine Revelation, has been very lately answered in the most able and satisfactory manner by a distinguished American professor; who appears to have made excellent use of his local advantages for the discussion of such a subject, and to have so fully confirmed, by his own observations and reasonings, the substance of the conclusion urged in our favour by the great foreign naturalist, as to have rendered additional defences of it entirely unnecessary.

The other objection advanced against the Scripture-genealogy of mankind from the supposed absurdity of making them migrate from some one country to all the remote parts of the earth is still more inexcusably destitute of solid foundation: since, what may have been done by many different ways, it is in every point of view an unwarrantable presumption

“ than the first stock should have lived. The stolen youth would
 “ resemble their parents and would at length compose the na-
 “ tion. And yet the Gagas, according to his Lordship, will
 “ continue to kill their children and to be a standing monument
 “ of the fallhood of the Scriptures. ! An excellent specimen of
 “ the easy faith of infidelity !” Smith’s Essay, notes, p. 96.

² Among other objections against Revelation, on the subject before us, that, which is often urged in modern times from the discoveries of Anatomists concerning the three lamellæ or folds, of which the skin consists, and from the difference in the appearance of the mucous substance which fills the cellular membrane of the intermediate fold in black and white men, is very concisely and fully answered by Dr. Smith, p. 17, and 18.

to assert gratuitously was never done by any. Besides, so far at present is there from being even an appearance of impossibility in this migration, that passages have been actually discovered from the northern ^a extremities of the old world to the great continent of the new, which evince at once its ^b extreme probability with regard to the principal regions of the earth. And if we attend also to the ^c resemblance, found to subsist between the inhabitants on the opposite sides of these passages; we shall find this probability advanced at length to an indisputable certainty. Indeed, so fully convinced of the certainty was the naturalist, above cited, long before the ^d last

^a From the North-West of Europe and the North-East of Asia.

^b "By fixing the relative situation of Asia and America and discovering the narrow bounds of the strait which divides them he (Cook) has thrown a blaze of light upon this important part of the geography of the globe, and solved the puzzling problem about the peopling of America by tribes destitute of the necessary means to attempt long navigations." Introd. to Cook's and King's voyages published by authority, 4to. p. 55.

^c The Esquimaux resemble their neighbours on the North-West extremity of Europe. And the same resemblance is found also to subsist between the inhabitants of the North-East of Asia, and both the Americans opposite to them and all the other Americans, except those few tribes, which, together with the the Esquimaux, appear to have descended from the Greenlanders. Robertson's Hist. of Amer. Vol. II. p. 45—49.

^d Those of Cook and King. We find that the latter had an opportunity of seeing at the same moment the coasts of Asia and America. Cook's and King's Voyage, Vol. III. p. 244.

and

and the most important discoveries on the subject, that he declares he has “no doubt, “independently of every Theological consideration, that the origin of the Americans is “the same with our own.”

The parts of the new world, which are disjoined from the others and which have been represented by ignorance and infidelity as vast continents, are by the most recent and complete researches reduced to a few ^f inconsiderable islands: and, as far as can be collected from the imperfect accounts given of the inhabitants, it is highly probable that they were conveyed to their present settlements from ^g islands adjacent to the continent of Asia; from ^h which continent all the inhabitants of the new world (with a ⁱ few striking exceptions to the contrary) appear to have mi-

^c Buffon (as before) Vol. I. p. 279.

^f New Holland, though very considerable in its size, is not at all so in its population. It was, however, known in part before the other islands here referred to.

^g The inhabitants of these islands are supposed to have been all derived from the Malayans. See *Introd. to Cook's and King's Voyages*, 4to. p. 71—73, and Vol. I. p. 116 and 202.

^h Robertson's *History of America*, Vol. II. p. 47. 8vo. Edit.

ⁱ The Esquimeaux, and some few other Americans, who appear to have migrated from the North-West extremity of Europe, are to be excepted. Robertson's *Hist.* (as above) p. 47, 48. See concerning these other Americans on the western coast of North America, who resemble the Esquimeaux and Greenlanders, Cook's and King's *Voyage*, Vol. II. p. 521, 522.

grated.

grated. Nor shall we wonder that we are unacquainted with the circumstances of their migration; if we consider, that this event probably happened at no great distance from the time, when our own ancestors set out from the same regions to people the western world by an opposite rout.

Besides all the confirmation, derived to our Religion from the want of solid foundation in the objections against it thus drawn from particular discoveries in nature, if we reflect (as we well may, while we are pursuing such objections) that the ascertained and acknowledged condition of every nation evidently corresponds at present with the Scripture-history of the fall of man, and of the perversion of his nature; and that, while no probable account has been given of the origin and dispersion, none has been given even of the corruption of mankind, except by Revelation; if we thus reflect, we shall find that modern discoveries have not only extensively contributed to obviate philosophical objections against our Religion, but that they have, moreover, furnished us with positive arguments in its favour. And since it is our national glory to have explored in the present age the whole surface of the globe; we may henceforth bid defiance to conjecture and confidently

confidently assert from the testimony of eye-witnesses, that all the different people of the earth, wheresoever found and howsoever circumstanced, unite to prove the truth of the Scripture-history.

Such, particularly, are the origin and foundation of the objections advanced against our Religion from the pretensions of philosophy: from abstracted reasonings, no less than from immediate discoveries in nature. The former appear to derive their existence and support from that ignorance of the essences of things, which must ever render us liable to be deceived by references of them to metaphysical and suppositious causes: the latter appear to depend upon misconceptions with regard to the intention of our Religion, or upon erroneous opinions with regard to the discoveries themselves from which they are drawn. So satisfactory, therefore, are the reasons, which we have to advance on this part of our subject in vindication of the Hope that is in us.

What, then, are we to think of the men, who propose * such objections, as grounds for

* “ Paradoxical writers have flattered themselves that infidelity would gain ground as philosophy advanced. So fan-
 “ guine was a late projector in this way, that he would some-
 “ times

an universal rejection of Christianity; who profess to disbelieve all the plainest truths of Revelation, and fully to approve the most adventurous suggestions of human philosophy? If the affectation of superior wisdom, or the lust of sensual pleasure, make them dissemble their real sentiments; we need not, doubtless, insist upon the extreme folly of sacrificing to such motives the glorious prospects of Christianity. But, if they are sincere in their professions; we have to lament that God has given them up to ^l believe a lye, and that the Almighty has made foolishness the wisdom of this world. It is not, however, for us to judge concerning others, but to beware lest we also be spoiled through philosophy. And, while we defend the infallible word of Revelation against different assaults of the cunning craftiness of men, let us be careful to remember, what can never be too often insisted upon, ^m “that God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble.”

I have now gone through the four different heads, under which I proposed to state the

“times give it as his opinion that Christianity could not outlast the present century.”

Beattie's Evidences, Vol. II. p. 152, 153.

^l 2 Theff. ii 11.

^m James, iv. 6.

principal

principal circumstances, which affect our Christian Faith. The reasons, which I alleged for thus calling your attention to truths, of which you must often before have heard the greater part, and which might enable us to give a satisfactory answer to every enquiry concerning the Hope that is in us, were drawn from the opposition at present directed against our Religion, from the utility of interspersing at times some general account of our Religion among the particular subjects marked out for this lecture, and from the advantage necessarily to be derived from such general instruction by the younger part of my audience for whose benefit this Institution was peculiarly calculated. I doubt not but these reasons will be deemed fully sufficient to justify the choice, which I have made of my subject. But, independently of all such particular reasons, so unrestrained is the freedom of our will and so commensurate with our whole lives is the imperfection of our nature; that the oldest, the wisest, and the best, among us often want to be reminded of the general truths, which have been the the subject of these discourses. The information, therefore, which has been given in them, may through the grace of God be essentially serviceable to all who have attended to it.

May

May neither that grace, nor our own endeavours, ever be wanting to render such information thus serviceable to us all to all eternity!

T H E E N D.

E R R A T A.

- Dedication, l. 5. *read* SERMONS *instead of* LECTURES.
Pag. 9. l. 13. *read* individual's *instead of* invidual's.
P. 52. l. 5. *omit* under.
P. 66. l. 5. *insert* the *before* same.
P. 131. Note ^m. l. 2. *read* Montagne *instead of* Montague.
P. 189. Note ^k. l. 3. *read* γυγνομενα *instead of* γενομενα.
P. 226. Note ^d. l. 5. *read* απαρητος *instead of* απηρητος.

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